

Dying Sucks

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So I died... And instead of going to heaven or hell I get reborn as a baby in a "fantasy world". Sounds cool right? Problem is I'm born into AoT.

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Dying Sucks Part 1

I'm shameless enough to do a self-insert

Welp, I'm dead.

I don't even know what to think even more. I didn't even die from old age like how I wanted to, nope, all it took was a baseball hitting me in the head and I was done for. I can vaguely remember a sharp pain in my head before it dulled to a loud consistent thump, my vision blurred and that was all before the black started to appear.

I feel like that happened only a couple of minutes ago... huh it only took me a couple of minutes to die. I was sure that I was better than that, but nope, in just a couple of minutes, I was dead. I wonder why I'm not panicking, I consider myself to be pretty level-headed but even I know that dying would make me go into a frenzy. It must be the effect of death, after all, how could anyone explain the floating in the cold abyss part.

I turned my head to look and... yep all that surrounds me is black. Well it doesn't matter, I can't bring myself to panic, what's done is done and all things considered, being dead feels kind of nice, there's just this cool feeling in my mind, like an ocean trapped in my head, and its waves soothing my soul. I don't know it just feels nice.

So as I just continue floating in the abyss, and I bring myself to wonder if this is how it's going to be for eternity. Will I just continue floating doing nothing but enjoy the feeling of death? It sounds boring in all honesty. Do all dead people go through this? Are they just floating in their own place of existence like me, or are they somewhere else? Hmmm, that's pretty interesting to think about.

Speaking of where did all those theories of the afterlife come from? Like heaven and reincarnation, there isn't even anything of the like in

death. Or at least I think. Maybe I just wasn't worthy enough. I mean I didn't do much but enjoy my youth, working and having fun was all I did. I wasn't a hero for the unfortunate, maybe that's why I'm here just floating. I wasn't good enough for the good deals of death but wasn't bad enough to suffer in death. Yeah being in the middle ground of death... I feel cheated.

I was hoping to be reincarnated into another world like in those isekai. I hoped that's what happened after death, sure heaven was a nice thought, but knowing that you could never sin for eternity, well that was kind of a deal-breaker for me, and besides all, you would do was bask in the sun and talk with your ancestors and all the dead people. I was more or less an antisocial person when I was alive, sure I liked talking to people and being in their presence as much as the next person, but I had to recharge my social batteries and be in my solitude for a couple of hours. In heaven talking was all you could do, a nightmare for me and my introverted brethren... or at least I think it would, but then again I wouldn't know seeing as I didn't get into heaven.

Reincarnation is where it's at honestly. Having a second chance at life, in a world filled with fantasy and the like sounds so much better. I already know I would've been a badass protagonist, because unlike those other shonen fools I would try to get good, instead of having to rely on a harem and plot armor. Honestly man, the isekai genre went downhill after konosuba and overlord, everything is a copy and paste nowadays, or was. Except for Rimuru and Naofumi, those two are the goats.

I feel cheated because I know the people that followed Buddhism got to follow that route, or maybe they got reborn into slimes. Honestly, rebirth is kind of a double-edged sword, you have the same chances of being turned into a butterfly or a dragon. I think?

Anyhow, I wish I just went to another world instead of floating in the abyss.

A grand light shone down from somewhere in the abyss. The light engulfed me in a mellow gleam, it reminded me of my mom's hug... Ma. Huh. Right being dead means that I can't see my family and friends. I can't make any more memories with them. I felt a few tears drop from my face when I realized that I would never feel their love again. The light just reminded me of all the good things I would never get to experience now, all the things that I enjoyed in life are now gone forever. So I just let myself cry, basking in the homely light.

But soon the light started to fade away, warmth being replaced with the cold. I struggled to get back to the light, crying for it to come back because it was the only thing that reminded me of life. And before soon I was just embraced by the cold instead. So I cried... until I found myself being grabbed, I wiggled and cried, hearing unintelligible noises reach my ears. But then I stopped as a thought occurred to me.

Did I... just come out of the womb?... The blanket that covered me and the breast I laid against answered my question.

... Death has a fucked up way of giving you what you want.

I was born into a family of two. My new parents were called Charles and Layla Monke, they looked young when I first saw them, more than likely in their mid-twenties, and judging from their clothes, I was living in the past, or maybe in a fantasy world filled with wizards. They were fairly attractive I'm willing to admit, both having black curly hair with brown eyes and a shade of pale tan skin, so I had good hopes for the future. Anyhow they decided to name me J, and - despite the simplicity- I don't mind it that much since my old name started with a J, and I'm happy I didn't get some cheesy ass name.

Like Arnold.

They were cuddling people I realized, always being in the same room as me and never letting me out of their sight even when I couldn't crawl. But other than that they were ideal parents in a happy

relationship. My dad worked as a carpenter while my mother was a housewife, and then there was me the baby. And I just now realized how much being a newborn sucked ass, all you do is lay around all day shitting and pissing. Oh, the embarrassment of having to crap my first diaper haunts me, along with feeling it on my ass.

We don't talk about how I was fed.

As the months passed and as my little body grew stronger I was finally able to crawl around the house, which was a modest two-story building. Sure there were some problems with Charles and Layla being too protective but soon enough my stubbornness to explore wore them down enough. In the house, there were four rooms, the master where my parents and I slept, another bedroom which I think would be mine when I'm old enough, a study filled with books, and a single bathroom. I was surprised that there was plumbing but I'm content enough with not needing to shit in a bucket in the future.

With not much to do as a baby, I began picking up books to read. The language wasn't English so I couldn't understand any of it and I still couldn't understand what my parents were saying so I was kind of left in a loop. I had to wait until I turned a year old where words finally started to make sense to me, sure sometimes they were still a garbled mess, entering one ear and coming out the other, but I felt that I was making good progress if the compliments from my parents were anything to go by.

It wasn't too soon until reading came to me. There was a big assortment of books ranging from all types of genre, it was a paradise for book readers, or should I suppose. Funny thing is that there were no history books, just fictional tales of heroes and villains, some myths and legends, but other than that nothing else.

Some time passed and I was finally able to walk by myself. Charles and Layla were so overjoyed that they decided to bring me outside for a day in the town. Not that I wasn't taken out before, but for some odd reason I always get so drowsy being outside and end up falling asleep. Maybe I had some sort of illness. God, I hope I'm not allergic

to the sun. Anyhow, they dressed up nicely with Charles wearing a pleasant blue shirt and brown pants, while mother put on a pretty yellow sundress accompanied by white sandals. I on the other hand was still equipped with my baby clothes.

I was already prepared for sleep to take me, but surprisingly I wasn't the slightest bit drowsy. If anything, I was buzzing with energy. The air was crisp with the fragrant smell of grass and flowers. The sun was bearing down, not harshly but enough for a small layer of sweat to shine on my skin. It was nice, I commended my parents for their location of living. I looked around, taking in the sights of the bustling street, with people going on with their lives, kids playing on the streets, and soldiers drinking...

Soldiers?

There were a total of four soldiers each drinking and being merry with their beer, ignoring the people around them as they did to them. But there was one thing that drew my attention to them, jackets made from brown leather with two roses on the back. A pit of ice formed in my stomach, because I recognized that insignia, it belonged to one of my most favorite anime. Charles and Layla took notice of my unease and tried to comfort me but I instead wiggled free from Layla's grasp and waddled my way through the street. The buildings blocked my view of the sky so I tried to find someplace without them. Luckily I stumbled across a market square where vendors were selling their wares. And beyond them looming over the city, there they were.

Walls.

I looked at them, and I couldn't think at the moment, my brain failing to comprehend the scenery before me. Those walls brought to me newfound terrors that I never felt before in my past and present lives. After all, being born into a world filled with titans was hell itself.

As I stared, a pair of hands picked me up from the ground.

Well, fuck... fuck... fuck fuck fuckity fucking hell this is such bullshit!

Why!? Why of all the millions of billions of worlds did I just so happen to be born into Attack on Titan! Like what kind of fucking bullshit luck is that!? Couldn't it have been the fucking Lord of the Rings or I don't know maybe fucking Naruto!? Hell! Even My Little Pony is better! What did I do to deserve this!?

Wait, no. I'm panicking. Panicking is bad. I just need to calm down, take in some deep breaths and let my little nostrils take in some air. Let the soothing air calm my brain and beating heart, breathe in, breathe out, breathe in, breathe out, just embrace the comfort of mother holding you close to her. Ignore her and father's incessant babble. Ok, good now let's think about this, I died and got reincarnated into Aot, ok that's bad but why is it bad, maybe it's because of the Titans out in the walls, or maybe because of the rest of the world hating on us Eldians.

... Other than that there are no other bad things regarding Aot... forgot about the internal problems, okay so titans, the world, and a shitload of thugs, kidnappers, mercenaries, and other people... Actually, that isn't too much different from back home, just replace the titans with natural disasters and boom an exact copy of my past life, maybe a little bit less advanced but the point still stands.

... Kind of...

Anyhow, I've pointed out the flaws of this world, and I find them all not too bad. But why was I worried? Maybe it had to do with most people born dying horrible deaths. But then again it mainly is the soldiers who died those kinds of deaths... never mind, Shiganshina and Trost had to deal with those bad ends along with the people that were forced to go 'reclaim the land'. Should I also count the Interior since a lot of people were killed because Eren and Annie were fighting? Ohhh right, Eren... that's why I'm terrified as a bitch right now, that dude is the meaning of death. My guy is such a big mass murderer that it would make the likes of Hitler proud. That's not counting the number of people that died indirectly because of him.

I'm pretty sure that he was the reason behind most soldier's deaths. If you aren't part of the main cast then you're dead... sort of. Because just look at Sasha she was loved and stuff but now she's dead, or will be, or maybe she is? Doesn't matter.

Seeing as how the walls are still intact it means that Eren hasn't even activated the rumbling so I was born before that... Wait... Are Eren and the rest even born yet?... Yeah... Hell Yeah! Why am I assuming that I was born at the same time as the main cast? Silly thoughts, that's why! The walls have been up for around a hundred years and for all I know I was born twenty, thirty, or even eighty years before Eren. Or maybe I am younger than them but either way, the chances of me being born at the same time as Eren is so low it should be laughable. And because of that means that I won't have to get involved with him, because any amount of involvement with Eren means death. Let's Go! I'm going to live and not die a gruesome death!

I nod from my spot on my fretting mother's shoulder -who I've been ignoring- there is nothing for me to worry about.

"... Oh! Layla is that you?" A feminine voice caught my attention, I couldn't turn my head to look but I did think that she sounded oddly familiar, but at the same time she didn't.

Luckily my mother responded. "Carla! How nice to see you! Ohhh my, is that Eren? He's growing so big!"... No... No... Ignore it and it will go away... Please no... Please don't tell me, please don't tell me... NO FUCKING WAY!

I pushed off Layla, brushing off her surprise. I was able to turn my head and lo and behold Carla motherfucking titan-food Yeager, and there eating her hair was the devil himself Black Air Force Energy Drip Lord Eren Yeager.

... Did I upset the gods? Because I feel like I did after all, what other meaning is there. Of the one percent chance of me being born at the

same time as Eren it actually happened... where was this luck when I wanted rare items in games? HUH GOD!? WHERE WAS IT!?

Matter of fact, I didn't even need to be born in the walls I could've been born sometime in between two-thousand years ago till all the way into the future, and I didn't even need to be born in Paradis, it could've been anywhere else so what kind of luck do I fucking have!? It's absurd!

... You know what fuck this... Looking at Eren, I stared him right in the eyes.

"Oh my! They're looking at each other!" Layla squealed, worries gone as she tried to stop herself from bouncing in excitement, Charles put his hand on her shoulder in an effort to calm her down, but even he had an obnoxious grin.

"It's so cute, I just know they're going to be such good friends." Carla added, her own smile blooming on her face, it was hard to keep Eren's attention on just one thing, so it was just amazing how easy J was able to. Call it a mother's intuition but she had a feeling that the two of them would affect each other's lives in one way or another.

Layla squealed once again. "Look at my baby! He's reaching out to Eren!" J was sticking out his little arm waving it at Eren. Her own child continued staring at the limb, before he imitated the action, sticking out his little arm.

"Hey move a little close to each other, I want to see what the two of them do." Charles told the women, and the two couldn't agree more taking small steps, bringing the babies closer to one another.

"... F... F-F..." J bubbled

This time Layla shrieked, joy flowing out of her. "He's going to say his first word! He's going to say his first word, Charles!" Her husband

only nodded, the largest grin Carla's ever seen on his face present. But she couldn't blame him, as she too had quite the large smile.

"F? Perhaps he's going to say father?" Carla inquired. Charles' grin seemed to get even larger.

"Or maybe he's going to say friend? Or maybe even food." Layla didn't seem upset, but she wasn't one to rule out the possibilities especially when it came to her baby.

"F-F... F-F-F..." J continued it was obviously hard for him, as he was starting to turn a slight red.

"Come on sweetie you can do it." Layla's eyes were sparkling.

"F-Fuck... you." J spoke his first words, raising a sole finger at Eren.

I embraced the silence that followed and relished in the chaos that came after.

... Huh that's a pretty cool quote, I need to remember it later.

So yeah, this is a thing now, Self-Insert fanfic what joy and cringe it gives me.

So on different matters now, it's been a year and a couple of months since I've written anything on Fanfiction, and during that time I accumulated a good set of skills that brings me out of the beginner phase into the amateur phase. At least I hope.

Anyhow with AoT ending a couple of days ago, I have mixed feelings about the ending, it was good but at the same time bad, in my opinion at least. Mainly how it had to do with my thoughts of Eren dying, sure, he was able to wipe out most of the world but in the end, the world is still fearful of eldians, I know it is a little bit much to ask for something greater but ehrrrrr. Also,

I'm a little disappointed that he didn't leave a legacy behind, like a physical legacy I mean, I don't count Mikasa's scarf, that's why I was so hopeful for Historia's kid to be his but oh well I suppose. There were also some character interactions that I wished to see more of that didn't happen.

So as I was criticizing it I thought, why not fix it yourself, and I thought why the fuck not so here we go. Hope you guys liked the first chapter, I mingled in writing and I find that first person is by far the easiest to write, but I want to get better in writing third person, so I'm asking you all to absolutely give me all of your criticisms in the reviews. Don't hold back.

Regarding the story, I have hopes for it to go through all the AoT storyline with a different ending since I am going to make a couple of changes, have some characters interact, save a couple of characters, maybe kill a couple, but it is still going to follow the main story. I consider this my practice, but I also know my limits and I can honestly say that I want to finish this story. I don't think that I'll be able to. Maybe I will and maybe I won't but I'll be giving it my best shot.

Remember to criticize

The Battle For Bacon

Time sure does fly by. It's been about a week since I flipped Eren off, and to my surprise, nothing of importance has happened. I don't know what I was expecting, maybe a little bit more death and blood, but there has been nothing at all. I even listened to my parent's conversations from time to time and there haven't been any murders or kidnappings ever happening. I think I might've overestimated how bad Aot was. Yeah, I probably did, considering how shit doesn't hit the fan until eight years into the future.

On a side note, I know the future.

I died a couple of days after Aot finished, and while I consider it to be a good ending I had mixed signals regarding a number of things. But now that I'm here I could possibly change what happens. Why? Well, I'm already going to be involved as Eren's childhood friend, and I rather not die in a horrible fashion because I'm associated with him. This means that I'm going to need to be a part of the main cast for a greater chance of survival. So, why not just make the most of it? Help save some people while I'm at it. Because a lot of them did not deserve what happened to them.

But I'm only a toddler so my moments of heroics are going to have to wait for a while. So, in the meantime what do I do? I plan. Just because I can't physically do things doesn't mean that I can't prepare myself for the future. I have already made multiple conclusions that result in many more people surviving. Of course not everything goes to plan so for every plan that I think of I make a backup that has its own backup... maybe that's an exaggeration but I'm confident that most of my ideas will be successful. Especially since I have time on my side, and unlike most people I'm going to have years to perfect them.

Of course, my main goal is that I'm going to have to be a soldier and a damn good one at that. I'm going to need to be better than Mikasa.

Better than Levi. Hell, I'll just need to be better than a shifter. I'm going to make myself a menace.

So until my body is ready I'm going to be making plans for the future

/Four Years Later/

Alright so I'm five years old now, and I made a great discovery... Aot isn't that bad.

It's actually pretty peaceful all things considered, living in Shiganshina is at least. It has its fair share of problems such as lazy workers and arrogant merchants, but it makes up for it from the scenery. Large hills covered with lush grass, sparkling clear water with an even clearer sky where hundreds of small compact houses live under, it looks like something out of a painting. I feel like the anime didn't give it enough justice, because hot damn it's beautiful.

It takes away the knowledge of knowing that there is nothing but enemies outside of the walls. Knowing about the world and all its secrets is both a blessing and a curse, mainly because I am the only one in Paradis that actually knows the truth... I'm haunted by it. It's like I have the weight of the world on top of my shoulders knowing that I have the knowledge to cause a difference but not knowing what could come from it.

This is why in the past year I began to think hard about my existence, mainly as to what I could bring and change. I know about the paths and how there are alternate timelines, like the main path which followed Isayama's work, but what about the countless others? Mikasa was able to see a very different path compared to what happened so there is the possibility that there were multiple paths that everyone else could see but didn't. So, does that mean that this is my path? It's confusing since while I do know what is going to happen, me changing something might or might not change the outcome of the future -a butterfly effect so to speak- but Eren tried to change the future but didn't succeed so what does that spell

for me? However, I was never in the original timeline. So, if I try to make a change will this world still follow the original, or will it not?

It's so damn confusing since there are so many possibilities that could be made and not enough knowledge that I know about. I find it stupid how much I worry about it since I know that I won't find answers. But I can't help it. The thought is always stuck in the back of my head.

It's so annoying.

"J!" Much like that voice; that voice is also very annoying. Groaning, I sit up from my spot on the ground and turn to face Eren, who was running up the hill I had chosen. He looked more or less the same as in the anime, just a little bit more baby-faced and smaller. He also still had the little spark of childish wonder in his eyes. It's kind of weird seeing it as I know how dead the guy looked like an adult, so seeing him so full of life was a bit unnerving. Not enough to make me uncomfortable though.

"What is it Eren?" I hate the fact that I'm still a child and puberty hasn't come around to change my voice. Now I'm back to sounding like a chipmunk with bass in its throat, instead of my deep voice before death. Rebirth actually sucks, because while having a second chance at life might sound nice, I'm basically an adult man in a child's body and you know what that means? Hormones. Being aroused as a kid is not fun, especially when your mom's friends like to squish your face against their chests. Innocent to them but certainly not for me and I refuse to take the shotacon route. Especially since junior isn't back to his original size yet... that was awkward to say. Wait, is my head in the clouds?

Bringing myself back down to earth, I see Eren rambling on about something. Whoops, looks like I was ignoring him.

"Sorry, say that again." Awww, how cute he's puffing up his cheeks in anger... don't know why but when I thought that, I instantly got

reminded of the meme that goes like 'Aww look that's the guy that doesn't open up his buttcheeks in the shower'.

"Stop ignoring me!"

I can't help my thoughts fool. "Sorry, sorry I won't do it again."

He didn't look convinced at all. "Whatever. What I was saying was that there was a sale in the market! The bacon is seventy percent off! We need to go now!" Ahh yes, the monthly market sale in which one mysterious item will go to dangerously low prices. And it just happened to be bacon... bacon? Bacon!

Shooting up from my position on the ground I started sprinting down the hill toward the market square, with Eren not far behind me. "Go to your dad! We need the money Eren!"

"What about you!?"

My heart thumped against my ribcage. "I'll be fighting for our spot..."

Eren's eyes shone with fear, a rare occurrence. "Are you crazy!? You'll get trampled J! Let me help you!"

"No! The money is more important Eren! You are vital to the situation, don't let my sacrifice be in vain! Hurry with the money!" With a hesitant nod, Eren accepted his role. As we came to the summit of the hill we went our separate ways, Eren going to get his dad, while I was going to buy them as much time as I could.

If you're wondering why the two of us are both so serious is because while we do have meat -since the land still hasn't been lost- the prices for it are abnormally high. Back home in the US, the price for a pound of bacon was around six dollars on average, and while Aot has a different currency system I was able to more or less figure out how similar the pricing was. A pound here is the equivalent of twelve dollars! That's double the price! So with that being said and the sale being seventy percent off... umm... shit... wish I had a calculator...

multiply the point-seven... the price for a pound of bacon is three dollars and sixty cents! A fucking golden opportunity! I haven't had bacon in over four months! I'll be damned if I don't get to eat that meat for the next two weeks!

Rushing past many Eldians, I saw from the corner of my eye some kids rushing towards the market square. It was obvious what their goal was, but I wasn't going to let that shit happen! I need less competition if I wanted to have my bacon. Instead of following the main path towards the market square, I went into some an alleyway. Jumping over garbage and avoiding rabid cats, the detour bore fruit when I popped out into a street that should put me ahead of the brats. Rushing past a bakery, I hopped over a table where a couple was sitting, ignoring their shouts of surprise. I 'borrowed' their cream pie which the two of them were sharing, also stealing a small bag of flour that the baker himself had sitting out in the open.

Getting away from the crime scene, I sprinted my way over to a cart that was tipped down so that some delivery men could unload their supplies. Brushing past the three of them, I sprinted up the cart and was able to jump to a small balcony that was perched above with my feet landing outside the metal railing -my training was coming along nicely-. Throwing the bag over the railing, and carefully handling the pie I continued and got to the opposite side before picking up the bag, and climbing an assortment of boxes that were perfectly lined up, allowing me to climb on to the roof.

Ignoring the small scrapes that I got on my knees, I kept running across the tiles. Jumping from roof to roof whenever I was confident that I could make the jump until I was at the point where I was just a few blocks away from the market square. Looking down from my perch, I stared at the assortment of Eldians going on with their day, if you could call it anything I would say it was like a food street, where multiple food stalls and vendors had set up. Knowing how close to the market square they were, most of the vendors probably got to the sale already, which was why when I saw the kids from before rushing into the street... I had no remorse in my heart.

I launched the cream pie into one of the unsuspecting kids face, causing him to startle out a cry, but I didn't stop there, as his lackeys -or friends- stopped in shock I launched myself onto the street -it was only like an eight foot fall- and landed in front of them. They weren't suspecting me as they flinched. The fools had signed their death warrant. Grabbing the opened bag of flour I chucked the legal cocaine into their eyes. Their screams of agony didn't bother me as I slapped the rest of the flour into the cream boy. Only taking ten seconds of my time.

Of course, their suffering would attract the attention of everyone else, so making my grand escape I grabbed the remnants of flour that were on the ground and proceeded to slam it, making a cloak of flour and dust... That was sadly not as grand as I expected it to be since it only went up until my knees. But that didn't deter me, running behind a woman I flipped up her long skirt showing dark lacey panties to the world. Now that grabbed everyone's attention, mainly the men's attention.

As she tried to cover her modesty -squealing all the while- I escaped, using my small stature to my advantage as the people focused on the cursing woman and the crying boys.

Sprinting, I spotted the market square and... dear god... so you know how the zombies are in World War Z? Yeah...

Too many people were all piled in the market square, there was no space as they all crowded together pushing, pulling, and hitting, with money clutched in their hands, waving their arms around like mad people... kind of like Kazuma with panties. Now I feel bad about demolishing those kids. Even if they arrived here what difference would they make?... Anyway, my eyes trailed to the meat stall, the butcher looked overjoyed at the number of people that were piling up with him taking as much money as he could. Was he even counting it? On the other hand, his apprentice -who was the one preparing everything- looked like he was terrified, with people screaming and spitting at his face... I think he's crying. I feel a bit bad for the guy.

But fuck his feelings I need bacon!

I needed a vantage point, if I tried to get into the horde I'll be swarmed and won't be able to move, just pushed and pulled. The same thing would happen if I jumped into it. And I don't want to try my luck cutting into the front -I don't know how it could be considered cutting though- as I don't want manic people going out for my blood.

Frantically looking around I tried to find anything that I could use to my advantage. A distraction! I needed a distraction! A drunk! A cat! A titan! Anything!

My eyes stopped at a shovel, innocently laid against a wall.

... Chaos is a good distraction...

"Hurry dad! J needs us!" Eren pulled Grisha along using all of the five-year-old strength he could muster. Grisha held in the chuckle that threatened to escape his lips, Eren being panicked was an amusing sight to behold. He was normally so rash and hard-headed, so seeing his son being so terrified was a welcomed change.

"Eren slow down, we'll be at the market square in a few minutes. I'm sure J can take care of himself." He tried to reassure his son, but Eren started to pull harder on his sleeve.

"No! You don't understand! No one can handle those... those... crazies!"

"Lunatics, you mean?"

"It doesn't matter dad! J needs help, and every second we don't hurry he is in trouble!" It warmed his heart to see his son care so much for J. Despite Eren being a couple of months older than J, he was actually more like the little brother in the relationship. Always looking up towards J. It actually might've had to do with J's little stunt

when the two first met. It made him bust a gut laughing when Carla returned home telling him how Layla's and Charle's kid, flipped Eren the bird and said 'fuck you' to him. Eren though was unnaturally happy, giggling all the way home from his encounter.

"Alright fine." He walked ahead of Eren, and crouched down offering his back to his son "Shall we?" Eren gained a grin, hopping onto his back. Standing up, Grisha began to jog, heeding Eren's words of going faster, until it was less of a jog and more of a sprint. As sweat began to pool on his brow, Grisha started to regret his choice of piggybacking Eren. Ex-restorationist he might've been, but that didn't mean he had amazing stamina, especially with a suit and child on his back.

"Wait, Dad! Slow down!" Unexpectedly Eren shouted out, heeding his son's commands Grisha slowed his sprint. While he didn't say it, he was thankful for the small break.

Eren looked on further ahead, gasping slightly. "... He was here." Grisha stared at Eren, confusion dancing in his eyes... or it just might've been the sweat.

Eren didn't say anything he just pointed ahead of them. Grisha turned his head and... what the hell? Why were there kids covered in flour? Was one of them also covered in pie? How does this relate to J?

"This means J's in the market! Hurry dad!"

"Hold on Eren! I need to make sure that the kids are okay."

"There's no time dad! Besides they've already fallen..."

... Okay so his son was a little weird, but he did have a point -even though it was strangely said- and he did want to check on the kids there were already multiple adults helping the three, rubbing water on their faces and cleaning them up with rags. So it seemed that there was no reason for him to intervene.

"Ok then." He sighed, continuing to carry Eren, albeit at a much slower pace they headed towards the market.

I ducked under the clumsy swing of a fat man and proceeded to slam my shovel into his face, with a satisfying metal ring meeting my ears. But I didn't stop there, as he fell on his back, I proceeded to crush his balls with a hard stomp. Ignoring his screams of agony, I looked around and saw that while I was able to take down a good number of people, I barely made a dent in their total numbers. But that wasn't my goal, all I needed is for them to be cautious around me. Judging from the obvious fear on their faces, I was succeeding.

When I say no mercy, I mean no mercy. Not one person regardless of age, gender, or disabilities was safe from me. I crushed balls, struck throats, broke bones, gouged eyes, stabbed toes, pulled ears or hair, bit skin, slapped tits and ass! None were safe from my fury! Hell! I'm pretty sure that I killed several men back there! If any try to challenge me then they will meet similar fates of living or dying in eternal fucking agony! AHHHHHHHHH! FUCK I'M BADASS!

-At this point, I was high on adrenaline, and everything I said were exaggerations-

"Who wants some! HUH! Who wants to die you stupid sons of bitches!" For a dramatic flair, I even pointed my shovel at an unlucky guy, who was frozen in fear -more like disbelief- but I couldn't blame him. At five years of age I was single-handedly the most terrifying motherfucker inside these walls! Levi and Mikasa don't hold shit against me!

"J!" I picked up Eren's voice among the masses, and I spared a single glance. He was on Grisha's back, looking on in awe of my amazing feat, while his father looked on in... was it horror or shock? Didn't matter.

"Eren! You got the man's money!?" The people all looked towards Eren wondering how the two of us were connected... a big mistake.

Rushing at a particularly lanky man, I tackled the shit out of him -if his harsh exhale was anything to go by- and by the time that he hit the ground I was already up and going. But I made sure to finish him with a hard slam from my shovel.

"Yeah!" Eren screamed back, giddy as hell. His dad looked as pale as a ghost.

I rushed behind a duo of women and with a quick move of my arms lifted their skirts above their heads and under their legs, which I then proceeded to drag them down to the floor making sure to connect the fabric with a knot "Good! Buy ten pounds of bacon!"

Jumping off of Grisha's back, Eren sent me a quick salute. "Yes sir! C'mon, dad!" The crowd parted ways for the two, not wishing to be in their path or else risk garnering my attention. Eren skipped along his head held up high and proud. Grisha... not so much walking as he did stumble.

Eren stopped in front of the butcher, and with a big cheeky grin he lifted ten fingers "Ten pounds of bacon, please!" The butcher raised an eyebrow staring at Grisha, who reluctantly took out his wallet and paid the man. Not even five seconds later did he have a bag filled with bacon in his hands.

With our mission complete I looked at my last victim, a woman. Maybe around her early twenties. She was cowering in fear, and she had every right to be considering that she just wanted some bacon but instead saw a massacre. So I decided to let her off with a warning, getting real close to her -I ignored the small spark of joy that I felt when I heard her whimper- and kissed her on the cheek. I then turned around and did not look back as I walked away besides Eren and Grisha, enjoying the stares that I felt trailing me.

Among the various compliments that Eren was bombarding me with I only had one thought on my mind...

I'm such a badass.

"What have you been doing young man!" I was not a badass I soon came to realize. Apparently, word spread fast around town, and almost everyone already knew of my deeds at the market square. Normally this wouldn't bother me because I now live by the code of YOLO -ignoring the fact this is my second life-, but if there was a person that I wouldn't want to find out it would be my mother; Layla Monke.

"Well? I'm waiting." Normally she was a very kind and loving woman, like Hinata if I had to compare her to anyone. Sadly, she was also just as terrifying when angered. Which is why the moment I got home with five pounds of bacon in my hand, all it took was one look at her angry face along with a slipper in hand, and I was on my hands and knees faster than Saiki Kuniharu.

"Ummm... getting bacon?" To show her proof I even lifted the bag of the goods... She did not look convinced in the absolute slightest.

"Really now?" She drawled, I shivered at her tone of voice. "So do you mean to tell me that almost all of my friends came over to tell me that you were causing trouble for the fun of it?" Those fucking traitors! I thought that they wanted some shota loving! Not shota suffering!

"... Yes?" I flinched hard when I heard her slam the slipper on the table.

"Wrong answer." She growled out.

My fight or flight activated at that very moment, and I did something extremely fucking dumb... I threw the bag of bacon at her face and booked it. She didn't bat an eyelash as she caught the goods with one hand, setting it down on the floor before stalking after me like some sort of fucking serial killer.

I fumbled along with the doorknob, cursing that my nerves were getting the better of me. I heard her just a couple of steps behind

me, so I resorted to my last resort... begging.

"Mama please! Mercy! Mercy! Have mercy! Please!" Just as she was no less than five steps away from me did the door open behind me, and my father peeked his head out.

"I'm home... Uh?" He took a single look at my terrified face, then back at mother who at the moment hit the wall next to her with the slipper. Without a word he slowly closed the door. Saving himself from the absolutely sadistic smile my mother sported.

I began to desperately slam my fists against the door. "Papa! Papa! Please save me! Help! Help! Don't abandon me! Don't get the milk! Please!"

From beyond the door, Charles Monke used all his strength to hold the door back. He pitied his son immensely, but he would rather that it be J than him.

"I'm sorry, my son..." He flinched from the scream of agony that resounded from his child's mouth.

Chapter 2 is done, and let me tell you I let loose some chuckles from my ideas. If you understand the reference from the last segment then you are a god.

This chapter didn't have much but just building J's relationship with Eren, and to show off his... determination and training? Whatever I liked it and I hope you all will too. In the next chapter, I feel like introducing Armin and Mikasa, mainly Armin though so Mikasa might come in Chapter 4 and the beginning of the series might be Chapter 5.

Remember to criticize people I see some follows and favorites but only 3 reviews

Speaking of, a Mr. richboy lion commented as to why I have my name as J and not a full name like Jay, and the reason why is because in real life my nickname is J to my close friends, so there you go.

He-Man But Young

I'm now eight years old... time goes by extremely fast.

It just feels like it was a couple of days since I was last born. Oh wow. Am I having an early-life crisis? Or is it just me thinking and panicking over the fact that I have less than two years before Bertholdt attacks?

I'm pretty confident of my plans as of late, finding fewer holes and openings in them as time goes by. Of course, I can not account for unpredicted parallels such as a stray titan or the like which is why I have made countless backup plans in a little notebook that I have hidden underneath my bed. Two abnormals followed by a four-meter, in an area with no suitable anchor points? Already prepared. A fellow soldier in the midst of a horde? Already have an idea of what to do. I am prepared for any inconveniences! I have backups for my backups, plans for my plans, I am like motherfucking Lelouch and Light combined into one sole being!... Except less murderous and world-dominating.

But I find myself a little anxious about what's to come. I have made a life in which I actually love. Sure I may only interact with my and Eren's family, along with some of my parent's friends, but that besides the point, I don't want anything bad to happen to them, and the thought that they all meet horrible ends is very much unsettling. For example, while only appearing for one episode in the show - more like two- I didn't really think of Carla as nothing but the motivation behind Eren but now... I see her as my family. She is basically my aunt in all by blood, and it makes me want to do all I can to try and save her. Carla would also be the force that shows me if I can change the future. If I can't save her, then my efforts for change won't even matter.

Good thing though I already more or less know what I need to do when Bertholdt attacks.

"Wait! Slow down J!" Eren yelled. But no can do buddy boy. Once I get going I can't stop, and won't stop even if you beg me to, after all, it's for your own good... I sounded a lot like a rapist right now...

... Ahem...

But the point still stands, if he wants to train with me then he has to be able to keep up with me. Doesn't matter if I didn't tone it down to a beginner level, I've seen it in many movies back home where masters make their students do hard training and it eventually becomes easier, so it should have a smidge of truth to it.

I sprinted along the cobblestone ground, taking heed of the many passersby that I rushed past, making sure in my head that I became aware of everything in my path. So when a carpenter working on a roof let his hammer fall by mistake, I wasn't struck in the head, instead I yanked that shit out of the air and threw it back for the headshot -it landed near him-.

With no wasted momentum I continued my sprint, turning left and right, making small twirls, and jumping over anything in my path, I was basically the reincarnation of the word parkour. Hell, I was so skilled that the moment that I saw a woman with a short skirt... Well, I just ignored her because it looked like she was having a bad day. But the child that was throwing a tantrum looked ripe for the picking, and that's what I did, picked the little hellspawn up and fucking suplexed him so hard that I sent his carcass into the year 845 - actually just pushed him- yet I didn't stop my rampage. Why? Because I am an unstoppable train and anything in front of me are tiny things ready to be run over!

-Let it be known that exercise causes adrenaline, and often leads to bizarre thinking and overhyping of one's achievements-

"J!" And there he was again going on with his begging, it's not my fault he isn't pushing himself to the limits, that's what I did when I first started training, I became Asta incarnate so why couldn't he do the

sa-... Oh... he threw up... guess he was pushing himself. I slowed my sprint to a jog, making my way back to Eren who at the moment was puking out the morning porridge he had for breakfast.

"Are you okay?" Eren didn't say anything for a couple more seconds since he was... well puking... You know he actually looks really pale... and sweaty... not the good kind of sweat either... more like the sweat that you have when you're about to have a heart attack... the sweat that says 'oh shit I fucked up and I'm about to die' that you see in manga... I fucked up, didn't I?

I rubbed him on the back hoping it would comfort him in a way, didn't really work out as good as I hoped since my hand kept on getting stuck on his damp sweater "C'mon let's get you to your dad." It looked like he was about to refuse but a ridiculous amount of bile made its way up his throat. How did I know? Well, I saw the thing make its way up his throat in the form of a horrendously large bump which he soon released onto my shoes.

Talk about a bad day... but I kind of deserved that.

With a sigh I crouched down, making sure to avoid the puddle of vomit, I lifted Eren up in a piggyback carry. It was a huge risk since he was still a little green around the cheeks but I was hopeful that the motions of me walking would help put him at ease a little. Although, I was a little scared when I felt Eren start to heave a little, but instead of the vomit that I was expecting he instead let out a particularly harsh outtake of air. Oh? Was that a cough?

"Eren... are you sick.?" I questioned him, taking notice of the sudden little movements he was taking... nervous movements...

"What? No!?" He exclaimed, but it was a little too panicked for my tastes. And while I didn't stop walking I did turn my head slightly, so that I could stare at him in the eyes, which were being quite shifty in my honest opinion.

"Eren..."

"Well... not really..." I raised an eyebrow.

"Mom just said that I was a little under the weather! I'm still perfectly fine!" The little cough that came after said otherwise.

"You should've told me you weren't feeling ok." He really should've. If I had known that his immune system wasn't up to date, then I wouldn't have made him work so hard. If he was sore or had a small headache it would've been absolutely ok for him to train, but it is an entirely different story if the immune system is messed up.

"But I am!"

"There's nothing wrong with being sick Eren."

"But I'm not!"

"Yes, you are." Eren was about to speak again but this time a sneeze caught him off guard... gross I have snot in my hair now. Eren rubbed his nose clean, red already piling on his cheeks, whether it be from him sneezing into my hair or sneezing in general, was anyone's guess.

"Fine! But it's not a problem!"

"Maybe not now, but what happens later? What are you going to do when it gets worse?"

"It won't!"

"It will. Want to know why?" It looked like he was about to speak up again but instead, he just nodded, a little frown marred on his face.

"Because you're not special." Heh, the shock on his face was hilarious. Like I just slapped him with a fish. He was probably too stunned to speak his thoughts too, so which is probably why he wasn't raging at me. Eren is just like all the other kids in the world, they are told by their parents how great -or terrible- they are, so deep

down each kid has this idea that they are different from the rest... a rarity.

"You're not special. I'm not special. Our parents aren't special. Everyone around us isn't special. The military isn't special." I actually lied about myself, I'm pretty sure reincarnation kind of sets me apart from the rest. Eren snapped out of his funk when I disrespected the military.

"That's not true!" He yelled into my ear, and I had half the mind to drop him right then and there. But I'm a strong-willed adult -actually still a kid- so it's going to take more than that to stop my lecture. So I spoke before Eren had the chance to.

"It is. Why? Because we're all human." Oho seems like I got his attention.

"We all live on the same ground under the same sky, all have our problems, our own lives, family and friends or perhaps none at all, we can walk and see or maybe some can't, we all get happy at times or perhaps sad and mad, we even become irrational too. Everyone experiences these things just like how we all sleep, eat and poop, it's a part of life. Sure some of us may be talented, but I guarantee that there is someone just as talented in something else that can be greater. Most of all we all bleed and die just like how we all breathe and live. You're just as special as everyone else, so you're not special at all. It's weird isn't it?" Hella weird. Just thinking about it you pass by hundreds of thousands of strangers your whole life, ignoring their existence, just focusing on what's on your head at the moment. But the thing is that every single person that you pass has their own limitless stories that are filled with all sorts of memories that were made from happiness, fear, anger, and all other kinds of emotions. It's quite fascinating. Because their memories separate them from every other person, and that in itself makes a person so special. It's only fair that they in return are just as unimportant since in a way they are just like everyone else too.

"And that means that even though our bodies may be different, it still follows human biology... so training so hard until you puke... when you're sick... in the cold, it's going to get you ill." Sure getting sick might not seem so bad, just get some bed rest and medicine and you're cured in a couple of days... But that was back home in the US... The highest form of medicine that Aot has is the equivalent of Morphine and Advil, so being sick can soon lead to death if too severe.

Surprisingly, Eren didn't speak after my grand speech, just furrowed his brows and puffed out his green-tinted cheeks. At first, I thought that he was giving me the silent treatment, but behind those eyes I saw his thoughts swirling around, bouncing off the walls of his head. So for the rest of the piggy-back ride was stewed in silence.

Walking down the cobblestone streets, I began to take notice of the large number of children in the area. Some were with their families probably going for a stroll of the town, others were with their friends playing among the streets in what looked like to be hide-and-seek, or maybe freeze tag? Others were helping the stores, whether they were family-owned eluded me. But soon I came to the realization that I was... pretty much friendless.

Besides Eren, there was no one that I could consider a friend. Sure I went to school and was surrounded by a lot of kids my age but my past... endeavors had basically labeled me as an outcast. Well, outcast enough for some kids to try and bully me in the past... didn't work out too well for them... they should think hard about trying to pick a fight with someone who likes to fight. There's this one meme that went like 'People think I fight to save the day... But really I just like to fight' and I take that shit to heart. So after giving them the royal beating my reputation pretty much plummeted in school. But not like I care too much, I like kids -I wanted to be a dad before my death- but by god man I don't want to be friends with them, they can be as cute as they want but that annoying ass immaturity is not something to be desired.

'Just you wait, I'm going to tell the teacher Wahhh!' SHUT THE FUCK UP! Fight me or I'll fight that little bitch too! Or it goes like 'Stacy has a crush on you!' 'No I don't!' I DON'T CARE LEAVE ME THOT... Maybe it's my personality that drives them away...

Ehhh who cares.

Turning the corner I spotted Grisha's Clinic -was actually called Eld's Clinic- and while it wasn't much, being only a one-story building it was basically the most renowned clinic in this part of Shiganshina. Hurrying my way down the street I opened the door to the clinic the ring of a bell meeting my ears and right when I placed my foot inside, I heard the distant sound's of flesh on flesh down the street... not sex... more like what I do to little ki-... fighting I meant fighting... more like a beat down actually.

While it wasn't my business to be involved my bleeding heart couldn't bear to handle the knowledge of people inflicting pain on one another -heh, nah I was just nosy-. But first Eren. Inside the clinic the first thing there was to see was the waiting room, which didn't have much just a counter with magazines piled together and a couple of couches with toys on the floor, basically an average lounge. Grisha wasn't anywhere in sight, so I assumed that he was in one of the back rooms probably checking up with a patient.

I made my way to one of the larger couches and promptly threw Eren into the soft pillows "Hey Eren it's cool to leave you here right? Of course, it is! Who says no to a comfy couch? Bye, I'll see you in a bit!" Not waiting for a response I was already running out the door.

The sound was coming from down the street so that's where I wandered to. The sound grew louder and harsher from inside one of the alleys... and a kid crying out in pain. Well, this might be a problem. At first, I thought that it was grown men beating on another guy for reasons I wouldn't know maybe he would be in debt and owed them money he didn't have? Perhaps he pissed them off in a bar and they took it outside. Those were the thoughts I was thinking

when I went to investigate, but now I find out it's a kid who's getting shit on instead of a grown-ass man.

You see people there are many things that annoy me, and few things that piss me off. Abusing a kid is one of them -I go easy on the kids I fight- so you better believe that the moment that I entered the alley I was ready to participate in a Wrestlemania bloodbath. But what I saw wasn't some grownups beating up a child, it was children beating up a child... Acceptable. Well, this didn't concern me and my curiosity was sated for the moment... sike, I may beat up kids but I don't go out of my way to prolong their pain... too much. Besides those three bullies deserve the pain I'm about to unleash, who do they think they are beating up a little girl!? What happened to chivalry and being a gentleman!?!... Oh right... feminists... Whatever those three are still in the wrong, and in my honor, I will make sure that they are punished or my name isn't Kratos! -It isn't-.

It isn't that hard to sneak up behind three children when they're focused on something, I enjoyed their jumps of fright when I necked them. After the shock of being slapped wore off they turned their attention to me and... oh they were the kids that I fucking flour bombed three years back. Looks like they don't remember me, because if they did then they would've acted a lot like most of the boys at school whenever I'm in their presence... shitting bricks.

"Hey what's the big idea!" One of the boys yelled, getting real close to my face. Dear lord, I could smell the onion in his breath, and it is not a pleasant smell. Wanting to get away from his mouth I did the only logical thing... I socked him in the jaw.

He fell to the floor without the grace of a cat, and immediately I heard the wails coming from him. What a pussy, I didn't even use .00002 percent of my power -I am over 9000-. Man, I hate the type of people that think that just because they can 'throw a punch' are acting all high and mighty, but let me tell you people ninety-percent of thugs can't fight for shit. Especially some little kids with ego issues -how ironic-.

Alright time to beat up the other two. Grabbing both of their heads by the hair I dragged them behind me as I walked around in a circle, of course, they tried to break free so in response, I just tightened my hold until my knuckles started to turn a bright white. It wasn't long until they became blubbering messes of tears and snot -much like before- but to teach a child a lesson you need to engrave it into their minds and I had the perfect way of doing it. With a quick flourish of strength unbecoming an eight-year-old, I forced the two to move in front of me and smashed their heads together in a devastating headbutt. I heard the coconut sound resonate, so I let them drop to the floor, as they cradled their heads.

I slapped my hands clean, satisfaction oozing off me in waves, now that the three bullies were taken care of time to comfort the scared child that I've been ignoring, and I knew the perfect way how... Instantly taking the pose in which you have your back facing the victim, I turned my head just a little so I could take a glimpse at the girl.

"Hey, are you al-" I had to stop myself mid-sentence. Why? Well, the girl who I thought was a girl wasn't a girl all along -It's a trap!- instead it was... well... it's Armin... my bad bro. Really thought you would be a girl who falls in love with me after saving her from her abusers, becomes my childhood friend who survives the fall and everything else after that, and proclaims her love towards me after I had a near-death experience, which I accept and we live happily ever after. -I am not a pedo... I just had hopes-.

Thankfully it seems that he more or less decided to ignore my little cut-off "O-Oh! Y-Yes I'm f-fine. Are they?" Hmmm, your stutter says otherwise my good friend. Getting close to Armin, I trail my eyes over his body -not sexually- taking notice of the multiple bruises he has covering his arms, and I can already spot the ones beginning to form. He would also probably have some hidden under his clothes, thankfully it didn't look like he was bleeding anywhere.

"They'll be fine... Let's get you to a clinic, there's one down the street."

"Mr. Jaeger's? Wait there's no need for that! I'm fine!" I was already picking him up the arms, taking care to not touch his bruising. So he knew of Grisha then? So it probably wasn't the first time that this had happened.

"Nope. Don't be stubborn." I ignored his constant waves of complaints, already making my way out of the alley. Never really took notice of how similar he and Eren were... they were both so stubbornly annoying.

"Stop complaining before I touch your bruising!" Armin flinched but did proceed to quiet down. Hmmm, I did always know that Armin was a small kind of guy -manlet- but I never really give much thought to how small this guy could be as a kid, I think that he's only around forty pounds give or take. It wasn't much of a struggle to walk -drag- him to the clinic, even if he did occasionally stumble. Opening the door, the bell met my ears once again and inside the waiting area, Eren wasn't anywhere in sight. He must've been in one of the backrooms with his father then. I led Armin to the softest couch and helped him sit down.

"Stay here. I'm going to get the doctor." I ordered, and to my relief, it looked like Armin got the memo. I'm glad I wouldn't need to get the handcuffs behind the counter... sometimes Grisha has some rowdy patients.

I walked towards the door that separated the lounge and hallway, opening and closing it I started to check the rooms which weren't a lot -only six- and to my surprise, they were all empty, nothing but empty beds and chairs with the candle lights unlit. I began to think that the two of them weren't here, but the sound of puke hitting water met my ears.

Ahh... Of course, the bathroom.

On the far side of the hallway, there was a hidden corner to the left in which the bathroom laid, and inside it, there was the father-son duo.

Eren was preoccupied getting acquainted with the toilet so I instead made myself known to the Grisha.

"Mr. Jaeger."

Grisha turned his head in surprise, his glasses dropping down his nose just a smidge as he held up a sole candle "Oh? J? When did you get here?"

"Around a minute or two ago, did you not hear me? The bell even ringed."

"Ah well no, admittedly that bell is far too soft to hear it from this distance. Are you here to check on Eren?"

"Well yeah, but I can more or less tell how he's feeling at the moment." A particularly loud squelch resinated from the boy in question who despite all odds raised a thumbs up... Respect.

Grisha chuckled "I see. Then is there something else?"

"There's this kid, who's hurt waiting in the lobby. A couple of bullies were beating him up before I beat them up." I smiled despite Grisha's grimace. Mostly every adult in this town knows about my... actions against my peers, to the point some of them have got used to it. Sure some aren't happy with it -Mother included- but most have learned that as long as they don't piss me off I am pretty much the picture perfect child -HAH-.

"... I see. Well I should go check on him. Can you take care of Eren in the meantime?" I nodded, heading to Eren's side, where I proceeded to rub his back allowing him to relax slightly before I started whispering sweet nothings into his ears... he didn't appreciate my whispers if the punch aimed for my head meant something. With a chuckle Grisha took his leave, I watched as his form turned the corner, I began speaking to Eren.

"Any reason why you're vomiting so much?" I didn't get a response for a while, as Eren still had some stuff he needed to get rid of via regurgitating.

"... I don't think so..." His voice was weaker now than what it was thirty minutes ago.

"Hmmm... Maybe it's because you're sicker than you thought?" I teased. Eren didn't say anything for a good minute, but I saw his ears glow red just a little.

"... Maybe..."

"You know you won't be training with me until you get better." He started gripping the toilet seat hard enough for his knuckle to go white, but eventually he let his grip falter letting his arms fall to the side.

"... Ok..."

I rubbed his head "Good lad."

"... How many guys did you beat..."

"Three."

"... Was it hard..."

"Nope."

"... So cool..."

"Maybe." I shrugged, it wasn't hard but that's because they were kids, fighting kids is one of the easiest things in the world... most kids at least. Need to remember all those people Levi shit on... Eren and Mikasa too... and Gabi, can't forget about Gabi.

It looked like Eren ran out of things to throw up, but that didn't mean he was feeling any better. Gently, I hooked Eren's arm around my

neck, taking care not to make any sudden movements I slowly began to lead him out of the bathroom and into the hallway. He didn't offer any resistance, allowing me to take him to where I please, which in this case was going to be his house.

"Let's get you home to your mom, yeah?" All I got was a small slow nod, but that was good enough for me. We traveled through the hall, but what grabbed my attention was that one of the backrooms was now in use, meaning that the door was closed but the candle light shone through under its crevices. Grisha was probably checking up on Armin now, and while I knew that Armin was in safe hands I kind of wished for both Eren and him to meet up sooner rather than later.

"Hey Eren, let's take a little detour." He gave me a moan of acknowledgement. Guess he doesn't want to talk... understandable. Adjusting my steps just a little, I made my way over to the back room door, and opened it. Inside, Armin was sitting on a bed shirtless - stranger danger!- with bandages(?) covering his body, with Grisha sitting in a chair in the middle of applying another bandage to Armin's left shin.

"J?" Grisha questioned as he stopped wrapping Armin's leg, in response I waved my free hand.

"Just wanted to make sure he's alright. Is he?" Grisha resumed his work

"Despite the minor bruising, he is alright the most severe thing he has is an intramuscular bruise-" It appears that he caught on to my confusion at the word 'intramuscular', "-a bruise in his muscle, which is on his right arm. It leads to heavy swelling and will be a constant for a couple of weeks, but it should be gone in a month." At that moment he finished wrapping Armin's leg.

"So I wish for you not to aggravate it... alright Armin?" Huh, he looked really timid, and... ashamed?

"Y-Yes, M-Mr. Grisha, M-Mr. J-Jaeger, yes s-sir." I felt Eren move his head slightly, he was listening in on the conversation too.

Armin turned his attention to me "Thank you, for... uh... saving me." I shrugged, and immediately regretted it when Eren groaned in discomfort.

"I'm J Monke, this is Eren Jaeger and you're Armin...?" Of course I knew his last name but wouldn't it be weird if someone who you met for the first time knew your last name even when you never told them? It would...

He smiled shyly "Armin Arlert."

"Nice to meet you, Armin. Umm, Mr. Jaeger is he fine to move?"

"Yes, but not too much. Why?"

"Just going to take him home after I drop Eren off."

"You don't need to do that!" Armin shouted, but flinched as he felt the pain from his bruising.

"True. But I want to and I have the feeling you won't be able to stop me... Could you?"

"... No."

"Right, so no problem. C'mon, I want to take him home before he vomits again." Motioning to Eren, who groaned once more. Armin hesitantly nodded his head, carefully putting on his shirt with Grisha's help. Jumping down from the bed, I took mind of his little grimaces of pain whenever he moved. Then the three of us began to walk out of the clinic, well more like the two of us since I was kind of dragging Eren along. Grisha followed behind us and was kind enough to open the door, the bell ringing again.

"I'll see you later Mr. Jaeger!" I called from over my shoulder.

"Yes, I suppose you will." Grisha stood at the door, a smile on his face, as he watched us walk down the street before going back inside of his clinic.

"Why are you taking me home?" Armin asked out of the blue

"Ehhh, feel like it. Besides I'm worried that you'll get into trouble again if I leave you by yourself."

"Oh... well... um... thank you."

"No problem." I say, making sure not to shrug this time. Eren was still being dragged around, so I didn't wish to make any more unnecessary movements than what I've already caused.

We kept on walking, and the silence was starting to get to me, all that met my ears were the steps of us walking on cobblestone. I can handle silence but not fucking awkward silence I need an icebreaker "... So why were you getting jumped?" I am not that anti-social! What the fuck! Who fucking asks that!

"Jumped?" Oh thank god, he's too focused on the word to take notice of my social inabilities.

"You know... ganked..." A normal person would've said never mind, in efforts to fix their social mistake, I did not. Even then, he still looked like he didn't understand what was coming out of my mouth. I let out a sigh, maybe I should try to make more friends.

"Why were three guys beating you up?" I stated as plainly as possible.

Armin started to find the ground the most interesting thing ever made -look a rock, kick it- "Oh... well that's... well..."

"You don't have to if you don't want to."

"No, it's fine..." You say that but you don't say anything after, it is obviously not fine.

"... Why don't you fight back..." Eren mumbled from behind my shoulder.

"Eren?" I questioned before memories of the anime began to flood into my head. How I remember something from eight years ago I have no clue, but this is exactly what Eren says in the flashback when he first meets Armin.

"... If you don't fight back you're always going to fail, are you happy with that..." Oh wow, he sounds dead... dead... is this future Eren talking right now!? Is future Eren speaking through young Eren!? I'm not prepared for this man! The answers for my earlier worries may or may not be right behind me! Wait no, if future Eren is speaking right now... what can I do? Nothing. Right, no need to overreact about things out of my control.

Armin sent Eren a sharp look -ooh scary- "I don't fail! I don't fail because I don't run away..."

"You're right, in a way I suppose. I can respect that." I say, fighting until you can't is respectable honestly, but it's just as foolish since that mindset was the one that almost killed him in the future. But when things go my way, we won't have to come to that outcome.

"... Your name is Armin, right?" Eren spoke, raising his head off my shoulders just high enough to stare Armin in the eyes.

Heh, Eren greet your second best friend with some more enthusiasm.

So chapter 3 is done. Honestly, I found this to be the most difficult chapter to write because I had no idea how to start it. It took me two or three tries of starting the first paragraph before I finally found the one I liked best.

This chapter was made from the fumes of the second chapter and it wasn't until I started to write the Armin scene did inspiration finally start to hit me. I think you can notice in my writing when I started to enjoy it.

Next chapter we are introducing Mikasa, I didn't know if I wanted to include her in this chapter, but seeing as how I left you guys waiting for close to a week I thought you all would think I was discontinuing the story, like a forever hiatus just like my previous two stories. Don't worry peeps, unlike the other two I'm having fun with this fanfic.

Didn't include a ton of jokes in this chapter, the main reason being that I had no idea how to incorporate them. The next chapter might be a different thing though.

Remember to criticize in the reviews

Pain, Family, and Cyclops

Is this what betrayal felt like? The feeling of your chest getting tight as sweat dripped down your face, eyes unmoving as you stare at the person you once trusted with a myriad of emotions coming from your eyes. Is this what the scouts felt when Reiner and Bertholdt betrayed them? Because holy shit this hurts.

Armin isn't helping me in any way as he stares at his hand obviously thinking hard about his decision but I can already see where this is going. While his accomplice just smirks in smug satisfaction, the smirk someone has when a plan comes together... wipe that damn smirk off your face Eren! It's pissing me off! But I can't afford to let my furious thoughts show, since they would likely scare Armin, causing him to react without thinking which would then lead to cementing his betrayal. So I resort to the one thing that never fails... begging -yeah right-.

"Armin don't do this to me, man!"

"I'm sorry J! Eren put me in a bad spot!"

"You don't have to do it! Just take it!"

"What! No!"

"Take it and we'll work together! We can jump Eren! He's the mastermind, he's the dangerous one!" Armin sadly did not look convinced in the slightest... fair considering I had the advantage. Eren, the bastard was remaining silent the whole time, content to watch things play out.

"Please!" I begged but to my horror, Armin closed his eyes as he grimaced.

"I'm sorry..." Time slowed down for me, watching as Armin raised his arm into the air, the card he had still not being shown, but I already

knew of its contents. A multitude of emotions burst out from my heart, I couldn't believe that this was happening at first. But then I turned my head at Eren, whose smirk just got wider... fucker was looking straight at me! I would get him back later as retribution. But at the moment I knew that I could do nothing to stop this turn of fate.

"Plus four! Change the color to red!"

"You bastard! I had Uno you son of a bitch!" That doesn't mean I couldn't show my displeasure.

"Language!" Despite committing such an atrocity, he still had the gall to try and reprimand me? Wasn't he a little too arrogant? Shouldn't he be looking down at the floor in shame because of his actions? We might need to have a little talk later regarding what to do in certain situations when actions are wanted and unwanted.

"You had Uno, but now you have nine." Eren -the cocky bastard- spoke at last, and he spoke the truth. I had a wild card and now I have nine more than necessary. Fucker! He was the one who sparked this betrayal, placing down a plus four, and leading poor Armin to make such a critical and difficult decision... So this is the mind of the man who wiped out the world... prick.

Reluctantly I picked up eight cards from the deck. Making sure to take my sweet motherfucking time as a way to show my displeasure. Armin looked away, putting his hands in his lap where three cards were being held, while Eren crossed his hands across his chest, proudly showing off the four cards he still had left.

"My turn!" Eren said with such cheer that it made me want to throw up.

"Plus two! Plus two! Plus four, change the color to yellow! Uno!" Without another word, he placed down a yellow one...

"That's not how it goes!" I frothed at the mouth, shooting up from my sitting position. I stomped my way over to Eren who still had that

annoying ass smirk on his lips.

"Of course it does!"

"Are you trying to tell me that I'm wrong!? I literally made the game! I am the creator!"... In my defense Aot doesn't have many games. The only ones that I could find were chess and checkers, and while those two are entertaining in their own way they don't have the chaos of family night impacted into them. So I just got myself some cardboard, cut it into little rectangles, colored them while writing numbers and symbols on them, and boom! Uno! 'My' creation was born!

"And I made it better!"

"You made it an abomination!"

"Now, now you two..." Armin tried to placate us, sadly he would be disappointed. You just don't fuck up the rules of Uno, it is already a dangerous game as it is, but fucking up the rules is begging for you to get your ass beaten.

"No Armin! He doesn't deserve my mercy!" I spat

"Your mercy is the equivalent of a skunk butt!"

I gasped "... How dare you..."

"Yeah! I went there!"

"Don't talk to me anymore Eren..."

"Fine!"

"..."

"..."

"..."

"... So you've seen that new teacher we have?" Surprisingly it was Armin who said that.

"I want to marry her." I say, why? All I got is three things to say... goddess... with ~ass~.

"Same." Eren agrees.

"Friends?" I ask.

"Yes." Eren accepts.

We men -we're eight- are simple creatures.

After playing Uno for a couple more rounds where Armin won most of them, -sadly me and Eren were tied one to one- we left each other for the day. Armin went back home, while Eren and I headed to his house to hang out since the two of us still wanted to entertain ourselves... probably by play fighting. But even then the idea wasn't as appealing at the moment. A sentiment that both Eren and I shared. So when we both saw Grisha changed out in his suit preparing his doctor briefcase, we jumped at the chance.

"Where are you heading off to Mr. Jaeger?" I ask.

"I have an appointment with a small family today. It's quite a walk so I'm going over there myself instead of them coming to my clinic." Ohhhhhh shiiit... he's going to Mikasa's... isn't he? Well, now I have to go don't I?

"Can we come?" Eren asks. Damn, he beat me to the punch.

"Are you boys sure? It won't be a short walk. Or run for that matter."

"It's fine. Besides, we have nothing better to do, and I was already itching to travel somewhere." I say, and while what I said is true, my main goal is to try and save Mikasa's parents. Sure they may not

have contributed much to the story or Mikasa's development, hell I even forgot about them, and I've been thinking about Mikasa for the past seven years. I think earlier I said that Carla would've been the driving force to show if I could change the future... well now it's going to be Mikasa's parents.

"Well even then I won't go for a couple more hours so, you boys still have some free time." Yea alright, sounds legit... Wait no! The Ackerman's would already be dead in a couple of hours! Wait, were they killed in the morning or in the afternoon?! Why have I planned for everything after the Fall of Shiganshina and nothing before it! I'm a dumbass! I need to know if they're alive right this instant!

"Why though? Why can't we go now?" I need to play it cool, panicking over the time is only going to get him suspicious.

"Well, umm?" Right, I barely ever whine so this might be the first time Grisha is witnessing me acting spoiled "My appointment isn't until later in the day."

"But if you go now won't you have more time for later? Besides, there's a chance that me and Eren will be doing something later. Do you really want to miss out on us two accompanying you?" I shot him what I considered to be a charismatic grin, hugging Eren with one arm... I decided to ignore his attempts to push me off.

"... I suppose I don't?" He said, I could see the question mark appearing over his head.

"Cool!" I clapped my hands "So can we go now?"

"Why are you being so pushy?" Eren asked

"You'll understand when you're older." The classic excuse, every adult says when they don't feel like explaining something to their overly curious child. And it always leads to the child ending up more annoyed, luckily all they have to do is ignore the child after the phrase is said.

"What? I'm literally older than you!" HAH.

"Like I said you'll understand when you're older."

"Alright, alright no need to argue. We'll head off now just allow me to gather some things from my clinic. It'll only take twenty minutes, promise." Grisha reassured us, and while I wanted to go this instance that would be far too much to ask.

"Ok..." I said crossing my arms, then a bell rang through the town.

Eren whooped "Oh! The scouts are heading off! I forgot about that!" He bounced up and down in excitement, joy vibrating off him. The anime didn't do him justice, he really does like the Survey Corps.

"Well now, isn't that the perfect thing to occupy you for twenty minutes?" Grisha asked, a smile etched on his face, while he began to put on his fedora -KENNY-.

"Suppose so..." I muttered.

Eren grabbed me by the arm, trying to drag me "C'mon let's go! I don't want to miss them!" And I let him do just that. He ran through the town while I was just a rag doll flying in the wind. Not even five minutes later did we see the hundreds of scouts all lined up already prepared to march off, eldians already crowded around them cheering. It made me sad knowing that most of those scouts would die. Eren climbed onto a pile of crates to get a better view, and I followed him.

Trailing my eyes over the sea of green, I tried to see if I could spot any familiar faces. I managed to spot several, but while important they weren't the ones that had gained my attention. Levi Ackerman was here... looking as antisocial as ever, if not more... Wait, wait, wait... were those Isabel and Furlan? Excuse me?! First off, fix your cut Furlan that shit looks disgusting, second was Levi's first mission based in Shiganshina?! I don't think it was!

What the hell?... This is the path's work ain't it? Are they trying to influence me to do something? Because I'm starting to get really uncomfortable when it comes to these things. But then again this is also a prime opportunity, Isabel and Furlan both die because Levi wasn't with them when that abnormal attacked. So what would happen if I just gave Levi a little... push in the right direction? Would he be able to save them, would they die, or would Levi die? I don't know, but when I see him later -or in a couple of years- I'll know.

"Eren, stay here I'm getting a closer look." Jumping down to the ground -ignoring Eren's surprise- I made my way through the crowd, being small had its advantages since I could just squeeze in through the gaps of people's legs. At the front of the crowd, I sneakily began to make my way to Levi -crawling under the horses- until I was underneath his horse -didn't it die because of Zeke?-. Standing up I rubbed the side of the horse causing it to buckle, Levi stared at me in surprise having not noticed me -I thought he would-, did he have a lot on his mind?

He glared at me "What do you want brat?" Damn, you really started it out like that? Alright, I see you. I won't in a couple of years though, BOOM ROASTED.

"Well now, aren't you just a can of peaches and sunshine." He scowled at me... oh sorry I'm supposed to act terrified right? Ahem... Ohhh nooooo, please! Not the angry face! Anything but that! Please Levi don't absolutely fucking wreck me like you did Eren! I don't want to lose my tooth!

"Now, now no need for you to pout." I tried to placate him -not really- but it appears that Levi still isn't the 'calm' sort of fellow that he is in a couple of years.

"What is it brat?" He snapped at me.

"Just thought that you looked a little... ferocious, so I wanted to tell you to be careful out there. I think that it's going to rain."

"I'm planning on it. Now go away." Ohh? But it's so sunny, why would you want that? -I'm so good at playing innocent, aren't I-.

"You know rain is bad right? Rain isn't what most consider an advantage." It looked like he was about to tell me to fuck off, but he just pinched the bridge of his nose instead.

"What are you trying to say." He asked, glowering at me all the while.

"I'm telling you if you're going to do something don't do it." Hah, caught him off guard again.

"What?" He said, his voice becoming much colder than it was before. Was that frost coming out of his mouth or my imagination?

"I don't like how you look at that blonde guy. I get the feeling you're going to try something." I pointed at Erwin, Levi spared a glance - scowling- before he turned his attention back to me.

"And what if I am brat?" He challenged. I saw his hand inch ever so closer to his blade... Really dude? You're thinking about offing a kid in the middle of the day, surrounded by hundreds of soldiers, and civilians alike? Bro, that's one of the worst ways to try and improve your PR.

"All I'm saying is that you're going to take a risk, and it's not going to work out in the end."

"Excuse me?"

"Yeah, you go by yourself out in the rain, abandoning your comrades. You could end up killed, or they could end up dead either way, not a happy ending." He remained silent for a while, I think he was trying to ignore me. Well, now I have to bring out the big guns.

"Besides, I think that you want something from the blonde guy?" Hah, three times I have taken him by surprise. That's got to be a world record right?

"I'm not wrong am I?" I asked... sheesh man you have your hand on the handle of your blade, chill out a little why don't you.

"Who the hell are you brat?"

"Ehhh, just a kid who more or less knows what he's doing. So I'll just give you some advice, if you want something from him chances are that he's not going to have it while on a mission." Four times motherfucker! That's definitely a world record! Also, did Levi and his friends never once consider the chance that Erwin wouldn't have those documents? Sure, in the show it's considered a plot twist, but in real life that's just not thinking hard.

I heard Shadis's voice, shout out from the front. Looks like my time is up. I crouched again, preparing to crawl from under the horses again -praying that they didn't start running- but I decided to give Levi one last piece of advice "Be careful out there! Titans always hide in the fog! I read it in a book!" No I didn't.

I scrambled my way under the horses, already hearing the ones in the front begin to move. It was just by pure skill -luck- that I managed to make it out in time. A little while later when the gates closed, the crowd began to disperse and Eren ran up to me.

"Who were you talking to?" He asked.

"A sourpuss." He looked confused but I didn't particularly feel like explaining myself, so I just shook my head and said.

"Let's just go find your dad." He was still curious, but he shrugged.

Instead of making our way back to Eren's house, we decided to head off to Grisha's clinic. It was a ten-minute walk, in which me and Eren occupied ourselves by talking about the things that happened in school. There's this one girl who's being especially pushy towards him, and when he had enough he told her to 'fuck off', she ended up crying and he was forced to sit in the naughty corner. He complained about it being unfair, as he was just defending himself. I didn't have

the heart to tell him that the girl had the biggest crush on him and cried because she thought he rejected her. Poor Maria. On the other hand, fuck yea curse words!

Time flew by fast as we talked about other things -bacon, trees, our existence as humans... - and it surprised us when we arrived at the doorstep of the clinic. When I was about to open the door, it suddenly opened, making me and Eren flinch. The bell rang, and Grisha stepped outside, seeing as I saw him carrying nothing I assumed that all of the stuff that he gathered was inside his suitcase. He looked surprised for a moment, before chuckling he said an apology in which we waved off.

"Ready to go?" Grisha asked, pushing his glasses a little farther up his nose.

I wanted to mess with him. "We've been ready, old man."

"Old man?!" Yea, Grisha is apparently very sensitive about his age. How I found out I rather not say... the horror...

"It's a joke." Eren came to my 'rescue'.

"Did you already tell your mother, J?" I felt myself freeze... no I did not.

"J?" Grisha asked, a frown beginning to form.

"He didn't." Eren realized, he cradled his head and began to shiver. Past trauma was surfacing at that moment, and I couldn't blame him, I was already running towards my house.

"I'll meet you at the outskirts, go on without me!" I yelled. From the corner of my eye, I saw Grisha wave at me.

Sprinting in the streets I cursed at myself. How could I forget the need to tell my mother?! She's already worried about me being in the town by myself, if she ever found out that I went to the outskirts

without telling her... No... don't think about it, I don't need the nightmares.

It took me less than five minutes to reach my house, at the front door I was panting slightly wiping off the sweat from the small run, calming down my beating heart I took a deep breath. Confidence, that's all I need. I opened the door.

"I'm home-" I didn't get to finish, as I promptly scooped me up into the air, my ribs being crushed. I cranked my head to look at my assailant, and to no one's surprise, it was my mother, who was vibrating with joy.

"J! You're back, did you have fun in the city! You didn't get hurt, did you?! You didn't hurt anyone did you?!" I would answer if you released me, woman! Sadly, my wish didn't come true, and like all the days before, I thought that I would die via crushed spine -she always stops before it happens- but thankfully today I had a guardian angel come to my rescue.

"Layla, you're crushing the poor boy." Carla spoke from the table behind her, sporting a bemused smile and a teacup in her hand. Were you two having a tea party? But don't stop there aunt Carla, please do more to help me!

Mama whined, "It's so that he can feel my love!" Yep, really feeling the love here... and my bones fucking breaking! Aunt Carla sighed, placing down her teacup she stood up from her chair she walked over, and opened up mother's 'loving embrace'. I fell on my hands and knees gasping for breath, one would think that after experiencing this for three years straight you would get an immunity, well you don't!

Mama poked her fingers together "I'm sorry sweetie, it's just that you got here earlier than I expected, and well... I got excited." If you were known to the weebies and otakus back home they would have been calling you their waifu. Thankfully though, you are unknown to them, the only person that has the right to call you waifu is father.

"It's fine Mama." I wheezed "But I'm not here to stay." Mother quirked an eyebrow, Carla mimicking her. Alright, it's ok for the two of them to be curious but why can I see suspicion in their eyes, I'm not that bad!

The two of them remained quiet, beckoning me to continue "... Well... how should I say this..." I really should've thought of a game plan... screw it "I'm going to the outskirts with Eren and Mr. Jaeger."

"The outskirts?" Carla wondered, before snapping her fingers "Grisha did say that he had an appointment out of town."

Unknowingly Carla had just become my wingwoman "Yea, those two are probably already waiting for me, so..." I trailed off. Mother was worried, that much I could tell, she was an overprotective hen through and through. If I was perhaps born like a normal child then she probably wouldn't have let me go, but I had shown her and father, and basically everyone else in Shiganshina that I'm not a normal child. So with a sigh, she gave me a nod.

"Just be careful. Ok, sweetie?" Dammit, why do you have to sound so sad? Walking up to her, I hugged her stomach, which she eagerly returned, this time gentle. Letting go, she crouched down and kissed me on the top of my head. I smiled at her, which she returned.

Carla gave a small gasp, before going back to her chair and grabbing a red scarf, before coming back and handing it to me "Can you give this to Eren, please. He forgot it this morning." I nodded, grabbing the cloth, wrapping it around my neck.

Turning around I waved behind "Bye Mama! Bye, Aunt Carla!" The two gave their own goodbyes, but I was already out of the house closing the door behind me. Rushing down the streets it wouldn't be until fifteen minutes later did I arrive at the outskirts -sweat dripping off my body- where Eren and Grisha were waiting. Thankfully my training came along nicely, so while I wasn't exhausted I was warmed up... Perfect.

"You told your mom?" Eren asked, eyeing 'my' new accessory.

"Yep. And here." I handed the scarf over to him, which he quickly put on. He grimaced slightly once he realized that he had a bit of sweat on it.

Grisha began to walk "Alright, then. Shall we?" With a nod, me and Eren followed him.

Walking from the dirt trail, I took in deep breaths of the fresh air. It was different from the town, which was always filled with the smells of food, and wood filling the air. But here, all that could be smelled was the scent of the trees, it felt nice as the wind carried it over. Eren liked it too, humming a small song that I recognized as something that Aunt Carla always sang to us whenever I slept over at his house. I began to hum too, instead humming the tune that mother sang to us whenever Eren slept over. Oddly enough, the two songs worked well together almost as if the two were pieces to the same puzzle. My goal was to secure the Ackerman's, but it sure was nice to enjoy the small moment's that life gives.

But eventually, all good things have to end at one point "So their house is just in this direction right?" I asked Grisha. He was content listening to our humming, jumping a little when I suddenly kicked him out of his trance. Sorry, was I disturbing your peace?

Grisha corrected himself "Yes, why?"

I gave a sly smile "No reason... Eren race you there!" In a moment I was already sprinting down the dirt path, kicking up dust.

"What?! No fair!" Eren coughed, waving away at the dirt as if it was smoke. With a growl he started to sprint behind me, sadly he was much much slower than I was. Grisha looked on, his glasses falling slightly, before sighing as he muttered something about troublesome kids.

I commended myself for my quick thinking skills. Using a race as an excuse would be the perfect opportunity for me to scout ahead. Thankfully if I have my way I'll be at the Ackerman house before Eren and Grisha arrive, so that would be more than enough time to see, if they're... dead or not.

Following the dirt road, taking notice of the scenery of the pine trees. Shit, these things were hella tall, why would the Ackerman's wish to live out here? Is it because Mrs. Ackerman is Asian? Because I find that to be a dumb move, sure the city might be filled with dangers, but you could always count on somebody noticing if something went wrong. The outskirts give you isolation and that might be a good thing, but you're fucked if some psycho takes notice. Besides, how does Mikasa go to school? This isn't Japan, fucked up people would jump at the chance if they see a child walking by herself in the woods, it would be a prime opportunity for disgusting shit. So is she homeschooled? Wouldn't that make her socially inept when the time comes to meet new people?

As I sprinted over a hill I spotted a small cabin surrounded by a garden. The Ackerman's. I also spotted three men.

There they were! Shit! They were already at the front door! Fuck I'm not going to make it!

Without stopping my sprint, I picked up a rock -around five or so pounds- aimed at the guy who was about to knock on the door. The muscles in my arm bulged as I gripped the rock as tightly as I could, when my left leg was raised in the air I stomped it back down, digging it into the ground I balanced myself swerving my arm behind my head, veins began to show and with a grunt I launched the rock.

The rock flew through the wind, cutting at the air, it should only be fair that it cut into the thugs back. The man fell to the floor with an agonized scream, grasping his back in a feeble attempt to soothe the pain, not much he could do though since the rock was embedded into his spine. It was an agonizing pain that I wouldn't wish to feel, but for some reason, I couldn't feel any remorse or even try to

acknowledge his pain... maybe death took more than just my life, and I'm barely realizing it now. But do I care? No.

The other two thugs jumped back in surprise, as they weren't expecting their friend to suddenly collapse to the floor. Which was the perfect opportunity for me to close the distance, however it was also enough time for the two thugs to notice my presence. With yells of anger, the two charged at me, and I met them halfway.

I skidded past the first thug, ducking under the swing of his fist as I did so, the armed guy was my priority. He lifted his ax above his head, bringing it down in an instant, I side-stepped the slam and responded by hitting him in the throat with my knuckles. He gasped for air, releasing his grip, jumping up I grasped his hair dragging him down until his nose met my knee. A satisfying crack of cartilage met my ears.

"Little bastard!" Not taking notice of the other guy, and I met the consequences as he threw a rock at my head. I was able to avoid it hitting my skull but the blasted thing managed to cut deep into the sides of my mouth, the pain distracting me enough for the guy who threw it to pick me up and proceed to slam my back into the ground. I grunted from the force of it, yet it didn't hurt as much as it should've, having prepared for it by raising my head and flexing my abs. If he slammed my head it would've been a different story.

The guy then proceeded to get on top of me and use his weight to trap me. He then proceeded to rain down punch after punch on my face, and while some did land -one busting my lip- I was able to avoid or block most of them. When he raised his hand a little too far up though, I took my chance and proceeded to jab him in the side, in between the ribs. As he shouted, I used it as a means of escape, bringing my legs forward, and using his thighs to propel me back into a roll. I underestimated his recovery time though, since the moment I got my head looking up again, he was already grasping at the back of my shirt, slamming me once again.

I landed on my back, but this time I was able to roll out of the way when he tried to trap me again. Making some distance between the two of us I used it as a time to catch my breath. While he didn't look bad he was grasping at his side a little, it was good to know that my jab made some lasting damage, for how long I didn't know. I turned my attention to the other guy, and he was starting to get back up, holding his nose as a way to stop the torrent of blood. He would be fine in a minute or two. Shit...

"Scared now boy?" The guy who slammed me asked menacingly - nah it was pussy talk-, as he and his buddy stalked toward me. I spit blood from my mouth, wincing as I wiped off the excess, before standing up. They were different. These guys weren't civilians, they were probably thugs from the underground. Of course, they would put up more of a fight.

I couldn't help it, a smile bloomed on my face, adrenaline coursing through my veins. So this is what a real life or death felt like? It felt awesome! Training and fighting normal people could only do so much, I had never been in a true fight until this point! There weren't any thugs in Shiganshina, never any true people who deserved my all, but these fuckers, oh these fuckers! They were about to get fucking shit on!

"Fuck you!" Rushing forward I caught the two off guard by how fast I approached. By the time that the two were able to react it was far too late. I jumped at the guy who slammed me, climbing over him until I had him in a chokehold, he tried to throw me off but my grip was far stronger than his.

"Shit! My eye!" The guy screamed, and for good reason too, I had just shoved my finger inside of his socket, digging around until I had a good grip and yanked out the organ in a gory mess. He dropped down to his knees howling, forgetting me entirely as he held his face.

"What's going on?!" An unfamiliar voice yelled. Sparing a glance I felt my body freeze as I saw Mr. Ackerman standing at the front of his door. Horror was plastered on his face as he stared at the brutality in

front of him, I got a glimpse behind his form and I saw both Mikasa and her mother holding on to each other behind him.

A hand gripped the back of my neck harshly yanking me off the whimpering thug before my mouth was held shut, and my arms trapped to my side. I struggled but the guy with the broken nose had me in a tight hold. Shit! Why did I take my attention off him?! After all my trash talk! Second time this bullshit happened! 1v1 me pussy! Fair and square bitch!

"Good day!" Broken nose said, and despite the situation, I couldn't help but question him. 'Good day'? That's how you want to start it off?! You have a broken nose, and I just crippled two of your friends! And you want to start it off with 'Good day'?! Also, your voice is nasal as fuck!

"Who are you?! And what the hell happened?!" Mr. Ackerman shouted, sweat pooling off his brow, unsure of what to do. Who could blame him? He's witnessing me absolutely wreck two adult men, I already took care of the guy by the door, who Mr. Ackerman was staring at, panicked.

"We're lumberers from Addison Wood! We were going to knock on your door to notify you about us going to cause a ruckus near your home! But then this crazy-ass kid fucking attacked us, he crippled two of us and broke my fucking nose!" I had to give props to the man, he could make up a lie on the fly, also Addison Wood? Could you make a more basic name than that? Also, your grip is absurdly tight! Do you fucking jelq, mini-penis?!

Broken Nose continued "Could you help my friend get to his feet?!" Broken Spine? Why would you... the glint of metal met my eyes from underneath his jacket. Shit! He has a knife! How could he still have the motivation for something like that! I broke his fucking spine!

"Ah!... Of course." Mr. Ackerman was hesitant, but in this limited knowledge scenario, I was the bad guy. Fuck! Broken Nose's grip was fucking tight, and he was tough too! I bit his hand more times

than I could count and despite my efforts, all I got was the taste of dirt stuck on my tongue! How many times has this dude been in this position?!

I watched restlessly, kicking and squirming as hard as I could, as Mr. Ackerman crouched down to Broken Spine, being careful with his handling. Is it a blessing or a curse that he's taking his sweet ass time?! Fuck! What can I do?! What can I fucking do... Ah of course...

I relaxed in Broken Nose's grip, and he looked down in confusion, his grip never faltering. I looked at his eyes and smirked, not that he could see it. But he sure as hell could feel the ax in his back.

Bellowing, Broken Nose finally let his grip loosen and I took the chance kicking him away from me. I smirked at Eren, who like much before looked dead with a bloody ax in his hands, but I don't need to worry about that.

"He has a knife!" I yelled, and Mr. Ackerman who was too shocked - having watched Broken Nose - let Broken Spine slip from his grasp, drawing both a wail from him and letting his knife skid across the ground. Mr. Ackerman jumped back, the realization of how close to getting stabbed now becoming apparent to him.

I let myself sigh, but no time to let my guard down, there was still One Eye, and while I don't think he would be a problem now, he can still act up... where the fuck is he! I can see the place where his blood pooled up but he's not there... Shit! If the trail of blood is anything to go about, he went into the woods. Did he retreat? In the original timeline he died -I think- and he was the guy who awakened Mikasa's Ackerman instincts but that didn't happen this time. Did I change the future too much? Am I supposed to take Mikasa's place now?! Fuck it! I'll worry about it later! There is still the possibility that Mikasa's parents are still meant to die!

"Mr. Ackerman!" I made my way towards him, and he was quick to get behind his door, ready to close it at a moment's notice... He was scared of me, wasn't he? Fuck this isn't going to help my situation.

"How do you know my name?!" Cliches aside, I didn't move from my spot unless I wanted to scare the Ackerman's more than I already have.

"I'm with Dr. Jaeger!"

"Dr. Jaeger? Then where is he?!"

"Around five minutes away! I think? Doesn't matter! He's close by and we need to all get out of here!"

"Why?!"

"Because I don't know if these are the only guys that came after you! And the other guy is gone and it's not making me feel too safe right now!"

"After us?! What do you mean?!"

Shit, I said too much "I got here before Dr. Jaeger! And Broken Spine over there already had his knife out! So please stop being suspicious and let's get out of here!"

Mr. Ackerman although hesitant, opened his door, stepping over Broken Spine he took the discarded knife "Honey if there's anything you need to do, do it now, Mikasa stay close, we need to go." He said to his family, from beyond the door Mrs. Ackerman scampered off, while Mikasa looked lost... it was kind of weird seeing as in the anime she always had a purpose -Eren-, now she truly did look like a little kid. When Mrs. Ackerman re-emerged from god's knows where she took Mikasa by the hand, the two quivering behind Mr. Ackerman, who slowly led them to where Eren and I were.

"You try anything..." He tried to threaten, but I cut him off before he could finish.

"Mr. Ackerman I don't want to do nothing but sleep, and Eren is the equivalent to an angry puppy. I think you're safe." I say, the

adrenaline had all but worn off at this point, I was running on fumes at the moment. At the moment I was ready to collapse, everything hurt, my head was bleeding and I'm sure I got some real nasty bruises already in the making. I ignored Eren's squawk of anger, instead taking the ax from his hands and throwing it to the ground. I ignored the Ackerman's family consecutive flinch.

Leading the group, I watched as the sky above us began to darken, the wind started to pick up blowing leaves away and chilling all of our bones. Soon it started to drizzle, small droplets of rain hitting our clothes and skin, before long we were all freezing, with fingers and toes growing numb and goosebumps forming on our skin. It wasn't long until it started to rain harder, with the droplets falling harder, now succeeding in drenching our clothes and hair.

"We need to hurry Mr. Ackerman." I said, taking the time to wash my face with the rain, rubbing away at the blood and grime that my body had accumulated. Mr. Ackerman nodded, in acknowledgment, taking off his vest and putting it on to a soaked Mikasa. I pointedly ignored Mrs. Ackerman with all my being, her blue blouse and pink skirt while pretty was not helping me at all. And neither was the rain... wasn't it supposed to rain much later?... Shit, don't tell me the paths are at work.

"Shit!" I whispered, once I finally took notice... I didn't know where we were. I barely ever went out into the outskirts of the city, so I wasn't as familiar with the layout, even after walking here with Grisha I couldn't remember the paths we took, the rain didn't help my sense of direction either.

"What's wrong?" Mr. Ackerman asked with a frown marred on his face. I took special notice of how tight his grip on the knife was. Isn't he supposed to be fucking optimistic?! He was unnaturally cheery in the anime!

"I lost my way, do you know where we're at Mr. Ackerman?" I questioned, he should... shouldn't he?

"I know where we generally are, but I don't know the exact location. The city is that way, but in this weather, I'll most likely be going to get us lost." Fuck...

"... This way..." Eren spoke, his drenched hair covering his face.

"Eren?" I questioned before I took notice of his eyes... they were dead again... shit the paths were influencing him.

"This way!" He took off in a random direction. I spared a glance at Mr. Ackerman, who looked unsure as to what to do. I sighed, before following after Eren, as such Mr. Ackerman beckoned his family to follow us.

Following Eren through the forest, I noticed that he was taking exact turns, not even taking a look at the environment or surrounding area, almost like there were directions engraved into the back of his mind. I had a semblance of an idea as to where he was taking us, and if my idea proved to be true then it would mean that the paths were involved now.

Not even two minutes later did we arrive at a wooden cabin.

You have got to be shitting me. So the path's involved themselves, so do they want the Ackerman's to die? Or do they want Mikasa to awaken?... Or do they want me to die? Or perhaps none of that at all, maybe they just want us out of the rain. Optimism am I right?

"Be careful, we don't know if there's anyone inside." I warned, optimism might be nice but it means nothing if it doesn't work out in the end.

Inside the cabin there was nothing that showed that people were living here, no furniture or valuables were anywhere to be found. But then again this was most likely a spot where traffickers probably met up. I scanned the room and nothing looked like it was touched in a while, made obvious by the amount of dust that was on the windows and floor, hell walking even left an imprint of our feet. The only thing

that I liked about this place other than the fact that it was creepy as fuck, was the scent of pine that the cabin carried. Oh and the fireplace, the fireplace was nice, the firewood that was already set was just the bonus.

"Mr. Ackerman, can you start a fire please." He looked surprised for a moment, before nodding and getting to work on lighting a fire, luckily he had a starter flint in one of his pant pockets. As he was getting started I explored the house, there were a total of five areas including the living room(?) I was just in.

There were three bedrooms, and a single kitchen all empty of any furnishing or signs of life. All that there was were a couple of chairs and crates -which were empty- that I found in one of the rooms. I took notice that there was a big clean square surrounded by dust, telling me that a crate was taken. I felt a pit start to form in my stomach when I noticed the small almost unnoticeable drops of blood on the floor. This was definitely a house for traffickers, and those crates were probably how they transported their victims. I checked the cabinets and closets that I could find, and to my relief, they were all empty and untouched. Good, One Eye wasn't here.

I made my way back and told them that no one was here, to their relief. I sighed to myself, leaning against a wall before proceeding to slide down it until I was sitting on the floor. I'll think about my dusty back later.

So we're all trapped here until Grisha arrives, however long that would be I don't know since he doesn't know what the situation is. When he arrives -or if he's already there- at the Ackerman household, he's going to see nothing but -probably- two dead men and splotches of blood leading into the forest. He's a smart man, so he's going to call the military police... or was it the garrison? Whatever. Then they're going to search for us, but what happens if the thugs are still alive and beg for help? Only bad things result... when did this get so troublesome? Is changing the future always going to be this taxing?

"You should get near to the fire." Unexpectedly Mrs. Ackerman talked to me. I stared at her in surprise, I thought she and Mikasa were far too scared of me to even try and acknowledge me. She motioned towards the now lit fire where her husband -he was shirtless- and daughter were cuddled up together, Eren next to them outstretching his hands getting as close as he could without burning his hands.

Standing up I made my way, sitting down next to Eren rubbing my hands as I did so.

"Place your clothes near the fire." Mr. Ackerman spoke, not moving his eyes from his daughter's chilled face. Eren and I looked at each other, shrugging before removing our shirts, -Eren taking off his scarf- deciding to keep our pants, we laid our clothes across the fire. If I did take off my pants, I would've felt like a sex offender.

It was silent for a while, the only sound made was the crinkling of the firewood. Taking a look outside, the sun was beginning to go down, I frowned. It was around this time in the anime when Grisha would've arrived with the soldiers, or should've. Damn, it looks like he wouldn't get here for a while, the paths were probably messing around with the time.

"Are you all, ok?" I asked, breaking the silence. It caught them all off guard, Eren included. Luckily he was the one to respond to me.

"Yeah, nothing bad." He said, but he didn't take his eyes off of the fire. I could see the myriad of thoughts and emotions flowing and crashing inside of his head, he'll be ok just needs time I suppose. I beckoned for the Ackermans to answer, the parents looked at each other.

"We're all right." Mr. Ackerman said, his eyes not leaving my own.

"And your daughter?" I mentioned Mikasa, who during all this hasn't spoken out even once. I noticed Mr. Ackerman tightened his hold on her just a little, not much but just a little. He may be suspicious of me and I'm starting to find it annoying, but I can't help but respect him,

he is a really good dad, if not just a bit over-protective, but then again that's not a bad thing. If things turn out alright, then Eren's going to have his work cut out for him in the future.

"... I'm ok..." I could barely hear her, but Mikasa whispered out before her parents could answer for her.

"Good." I said before the silence revealed itself once more.

"What about you?" Mrs. Ackerman asked me, now it was my turn to be surprised. With all the shit's that's been happening and me thinking hard about what's to come, I haven't had the time to worry over myself.

"I'm fine... Just a little busted up." To show proof I just sort of touched the side of my lip, and while I didn't show it I fucking regretted it. I touched my cut by mistake. Turns out that Mrs. Ackerman wasn't buying it, she stood up from the dirty floor and proceeded to rip her long skirt, until she had a long wet rag in her hand. She walked towards me -Hoh? You're approaching me?- and began to clean up the cut as best as she could.

"It's not good to lie, you know." ... Was she teasing me?

"It wasn't a lie... more like an unknown truth." Mr. Ackerman barked out a laugh that only lasted a second. It wasn't that funny... was it? Apparently, it was since Mikasa giggled too. When Mrs. Ackerman was finished, I nodded my head in thanks as she returned to her family's side. It was silent for several more minutes, with the sound of crackling fire keeping us company.

"I'm going to take a nap." I said, laying on my back and closing my eyes before I could get a response. I heard them all shuffle around slightly before going silent. A small body laid against my side, and I hooked an arm around their shoulder. Eren was still a kid, a crazy(?) kid sure but whacking a man with an ax would still have some drawbacks. He probably wanted to be comforted and I'll give him that.

Once he and I got comfortable, I let myself relax allowing the darkness to seep in and take me into the realm of sleep.

The creak of floorboards awakened me from my slumber. My eyes snapped open, ears already trying to locate where the sound came from, to no use sadly. It was dark, the fire having long been burned out as all that remained was ash and charred wood, the moon was already shining in the sky. Shrugging Eren from my arm, wiping away the drool that dried on my shoulder, I slowly and carefully got up. The Ackermans were all huddled together with Mikasa being squished in between her parents, they looked comfortable if the tranquil expressions were anything to go by, even if Mikasa had a little pout. I considered waking them all up, but there was no guarantee that they wouldn't panic and as such make noise, so I decided against it.

But they aren't what I was focusing on. Treading the floor like it was covered in glass, I made my steps as slow and quiet as possible, cursing at the thought of never including stealth in my training. I made my way over to the Ackermans, Mr. Ackerman to be specific, as he was the only one with any form of weapon. The nap while doing wonders for my tired body, only sped up my healing process, so now the bruises I had formed into ugly purple spots, and if my thought of there being an intruder proved to be correct I didn't feel as comfortable getting into a fist-fight as before. Luckily for me though, Mr. Ackerman didn't try to hide the knife, just discarded it to the side. Picking up the weapon, I held it in a reverse grip, the perfect way to hold a knife for counter-attacking in my opinion.

Then slowly I walked towards the hallway, watching at the shadows for any movement. Walking down I slowly peeked my head into one of the rooms, there was nothing that looked out of place, as it remained the same as hours before. I was about to leave, but the floor caught my attention, my heart leaped into my throat. The dust on the floor showed a much bigger set of feet than my own... Shit. I

don't think Mr. Ackerman has feet that big either. Someone is in the fucking cabin.

Turning around, I walked further down the hall my guard was at an all-time high, so when I heard the sound of wood creaking down the hall, I swiveled my head in the direction. Just in time for an arrow to whistle through the air.

"Fuck!" Howling, I dropped the knife. Immediately feeling burning agony in my thigh, I threw myself into the room I just checked with my good leg, slamming the door shut. Clutching at my thigh, I saw a foot-long arrow protrude from my muscle. Wasn't this shit meant for animals!? From the living room, I heard everyone else waking up, stumbling around in the darkness.

"J?!" Eren yelled, panic lacing his voice.

"Someone's here! Get behind something, they have arrows!" I screamed, before focusing back on my thigh. Gritting my teeth, I grabbed the shaft of the wood and broke it, allowing the arrowhead to stay inside while throwing the rest away. Heavy thumps came from the hallway, I felt my body freeze, expecting the archer to come finish me off. But instead, barreling in came Mr. Ackerman in all his shirtless glory, an arrow just barely flying past him.

"Are you all right?!" No, I am not, but I'm not that much of a prick to say that.

"More or less." I gritted out, he winced at my wound, before picking me up from the ground, carrying me princess style... Oi, what the hell. I'm grateful for you doing this but couldn't you have put me on your back?

"We need to leave!" He told me, getting ready to sprint out into the hallway. It was risky, but right now we were at a disadvantage.

"Wait the knife!" I told him, pointing to the hallway where the knife laid on the floor. Mr. Ackerman nodded before he rushed out,

grabbing the knife on the way out. I heard the whistle of an arrow once more and with a meaty thunk, hit Mr. Ackerman. Cursing, Mr. Ackerman got us into the living room before he dropped to the floor. I fell from his grasp, rolling across the floor a bit, having to bite back the curse that threatened to escape my lips. Sitting up, I faced Mr. Ackerman... shit the arrow was stuck in his side. I'm suddenly a lot more grateful I wasn't on his back.

I yelled at Eren "Get our clothes!" I went to Mr. Ackerman's side, with his wife and daughter already being there next to him. Thankfully it looked like Mrs. Ackerman was keeping her cool, having already broken the arrow and keeping pressure on the wound, Mikasa though looked like she was in a daze. Eren handed me the three shirts that we had -I noticed he didn't give me his scarf-, I ripped apart Mr. Ackermans until it was just a long rag.

"Mrs. Ackerman bandage him." I told her, at her nod I handed her Eren's shirt too before ripping apart my shirt, wrapping it around my thigh tight enough that I was probably cutting off my circulation. So when I stood up, the pain was bearable enough for me to move around. I took the knife that had been dropped again and handed it to Eren.

"Eren. You are the only guy who can fight now. Can you handle it?" At his nod I smiled before I made my way over to the fireplace and picked up a charred piece of wood, damn thing was still warm. Making my way to the corner of the hallway I raised the piece of wood, prepared to hit anything.

"Mikasa." At her name, she snapped out of her funk. "I need you to be on the lookout, I need you to tell us if you hear anything. Can you do that?"

"I-I... I..." She stammered.

"Can you do that?" I asked once again, staring at her.

"I... yes."

"Good."

We waited in silence, the only sounds that were made were the harsh breaths of Mr. Ackerman. I was starting to get restless, at this point they should've come into the living room, so what was taking so long-

The sound of the door being kicked open shocked me, and once again I heard the whistle of an arrow, this time followed by Mrs. Ackerman's scream. Turning my head I saw One Eye, bow in hand panting like a ravenous animal, a red cloth covering his empty socket. Mrs. Ackerman was clutching at her shoulder where an arrow was sitting.

One Eye threw his bow at me and in instinct I knocked away with the piece of charcoal, grunting as my thigh flared up, One Eye rushed me. Picking me up by my hair he slammed my face against the wall, I saw an explosion of white. Eren charged at One Eye shouting, with the knife raised high, One Eye let go of my head, I fell to the floor groaning, blood flowing out of my mouth as the cut opened up again. Eren tried to stab him, but One Eye just slapped away the weapon, lifting Eren by the throat and began to choke him.

"I'll kill you! I'll kill you!" I tried to get up, but I kept falling, my head swirling.

"F-Fight..." Eren gasped at Mikasa, who was just looking at everything in disbelief.

"E-Eh..."

"Fight..." Eren was clutching at One Eye's arms as he tried to escape, all the while staring at Mikasa.

"If you lose, you die. If you win you live..."

"Shut the fuck up and die!" One Eye roared, blood seeping through his bandage as veins began to pop.

"Mikasa run!" Her mother shouted, before whimpering as she cradled her shoulder. Her husband just let out harsher breaths, as he stared on.

"If you don't fight, you can't win..." Eren rasped, spit dripping down his chin.

Mikasa rushed to pick up the knife, but when it was in her hands she began to tremble. "I can't do it." She whispered out, but it was more like a scream to me. I saw Eren's arms fall to the side, my thoughts began to get panicked, I began to become hysteric.

"Eren!" I screamed, forcing my body to stand up but it failed me and I ended up falling to my face. Fuck! Curse this body of a child! What use is it if it can't handle some pain! Get the fuck up! You useless bastard!

Suddenly lightning flashed outside, and Mikasa's body stilled. Not a second later did she crush the handle of the knife, breaking the floorboard she sprinted at One Eye with a shout. She pierced him in the back, making him screech. One Eye let go of Eren, who fell to the ground gasping for breath, holding his bruised throat. Mikasa took the knife out of One Eye, leaped into the air, and stabbed him in the throat. One Eye gurgled, blood escaping his lips, he desperately grasped at his wound, but to no avail. More and more blood fell to the ground before he followed... limp.

My body figured this would be a good time to blackout.

Unintelligible sounds met my ears, while bumps stirred me from my sleep.

Groaning I tried to open my eyes, but my eyelids refused to open as if there were bricks tied down to my lashes. It was only due to my determination did I manage to crack them open, immediately regretting as light blasted into my retina. Grunting I shut them back shut, content to just lay where I was... where was I?

Curiosity overwhelmed me, managing to open my eyes slightly withering through the pain as my eyes adjusted to the light of a torch. It was still dark out, the telltale sign being the moon and stars from the sky, which I was able to spot from the uncovered wagon... wagon? Turning my head to my left, Eren laying next to me, sleeping with a bandage wrapped around his throat. Turning my head to the right Grisha was sitting down, his hands held together in a vice grip, head held down and muttering threats... shit he had a scary face right now. I wonder if he's furious about what happened... probably, hope he's not mad at me.

Grisha looked up, his furious expression fading from view "You're awake!" Damn, he sounded relieved, he just might get the title of Uncle Grisha if he keeps up the good work.

"Are you alright?" No, I am not.

"Fine." I whispered out... whispered? Huh... I'm not doing too great am I?

"That's good to hear."... You for real? I got an arrow to the knee - thigh-.

"Where are we?" I asked. Grisha remained silent for a while, looking out into the distance before answering.

"On the way home." Ok, why did you stare off into nowhere though? There's no need to be dramatic who are you, Mikasa?... Mikasa!

I shot up "The Ackerman's!" That was a bad idea, countless bruises were littering my body and every single one of them flared up at the same time. There was also the added pressure on my thigh and face, that didn't like to be moved.

... Huh didn't even notice. Touching my face feeling the padding of a heavy cotton ball stuck on my face. It was stuck on good, was it glue or tape? I couldn't tell. Looking down to my thigh, my shirt wasn't there having been replaced with an actual bandage that was

wrapped around, it was a little red, probably from excess blood that seeped out. I'll probably have two scars on my body... Cool. In my previous life, I only had a small scar on my eyebrow that I got from the time I hit my face with the edge of an end table when I was little. Couldn't even see it, my eyebrows covered it.

"Careful!" Grisha warned "... And the Ackermans are right behind us." Oh, there they were in a wagon behind us with... the military police driving the wagon. Oh, so it wasn't the garrison.

"Are they alright?" I winced, ahhh it hurt to talk upright.

"... Yes. Mr. and Mrs. Ackerman will both have scars but they'll be alright. As for their daughter, she's alright for the most part just a little... dazed."

Ok, so she's alright. In the wagon, her parents were sleeping, Mr. Ackerman having a bandage around his torso, while Mrs. Ackerman had a sling. Mikasa was alright, not having any form of bandages on her figure, she just stared at nothing from what I could tell... wait is that Eren's scarf? Oho, I think I see some rosy cheeks. I couldn't help the smirk that came on my face.

"And the thugs?" I questioned, Grisha seemed to tense up slightly.

"... Dead." He said... Oh.

I slowly lowered myself back down until I was lying staring out at the stars, Grisha took it as his cue to be quiet probably thinking that I was starting to feel guilty, he couldn't have been more wrong as I felt nothing for those bastards but in my head, I thanked him for the quiet.

So I succeeded, I could change the future... to an extent. I might've saved Mikasa's parents, but she still awakened her instincts and got Eren's scarf in return, sure it's not a bad thing but it still doesn't put me at ease. I know that lightning strike wasn't just a coincidence, I'm sure that it was the paths at work... Just how much could I change?

Are there some things that are just meant to happen? Eren's scarf was a big deal in the series, and so was Mikasa awakening, her parents might've not been categorized as important so that's why they haven't died. But does this mean that Eren's death will happen? It was the most important thing to happen in the series... No, I'm not going to let that happen.

For seven years I have known Eren, I have grown with him, played with him, talked, cared, comforted, trained, fought, screamed, and a shit load of other things, that I now consider him to be my brother! I'll run straight into hell before I even consider letting him die!

I haven't been planning all this time just for me to start to doubt myself now! I'll change that shitty future and make it how I want!

Plan now solidified and fate restored, time to move on to the next plan... how the fuck am I going to survive mother and father? Maybe I should try begging... could I play the victim card?... Shit.

I am tired.

I am so proud of how this chapter came out like, as of right now this is my favorite. But by god, it took me around 10 hours of writing and editing, which I broke into four days. Sure it might seem like it took far too long, but time flies by fast, and I blame my above-average writing speed. Besides I was beginning to enjoy myself far too much. At first, the only thing I was going to write was the Uno and Ackerman scenes but then I remembered a comment from an anonymous Reader in the reviews, there I decided to include a short Levi scene since I thought that the thunderstorm would be the perfect opportunity to involve all Ackermans. When I finished the chapter and reread it I felt like I wasn't doing my 'mother' or Carla any justice so I made an additional segment dedicated to them. I planned on adding 'father' to that segment but I felt like it didn't make sense, then I got the grand idea to add him at the end, but by that point, I just didn't have it in me.

It took far too long, but I'm for the most part satisfied with how it turned out when I was just about finished with the story I was running on fumes. Then I decided to add Levi, and Layla, and then the resolution, so now I'm dead. I want to start the next chapter as soon as possible but I think that I've exhausted my inspiration and motivation for the next two or three days. I'll probably have a chapter up sometime after Wednesday so be on the lookout for that.

Remember to criticize people, I need feedback!

Plan In Action

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

"My baby!" Mama wailed, crying at the side of my bed, father stood behind her rubbing her back, also holding back his own set of tears by clamping his hand against his mouth, stifling any sobs that threatened to escape. Really you two? I know I'm in bad shape, but c'mon it's been a week, you guys should have gotten used to me being covered in bandages and bedridden. And really how can the two of you cry? If anything I should be the one crying having had an arrow stuck in me... and with the two of you scolding me so hard that I almost got moved to tears, you two hurt my feelings y'know. Besides, I'm fine! Look! I'm even sitting up without any pain this time! But you two are over here bawling your eyes out.

Absentmindedly, I scratched my thigh under the blanket, the bandages itching at my skin. I flinched, as I felt the wound ache slightly. Apparently, it takes a lot of time for a wound as severe as an arrow to heal. The doctor -not Grisha- told me that my thigh would fully heal sometime between one and two months. I feel lied to, in books and movies they always made it seem like it took only a couple of weeks for an arrow wound to heal but in reality, it took months.

My lips were already, for the most part ok. It was an ugly red, and it hurt to twitch my lips, I had to be careful when I spoke, needing to talk slowly and take care of any laughs that wanted to escape at times but I just considered it training for my poker face... Damn, I wish I could listen to Lady Gaga, right about now. P-p-p-poker face, p-p-p-poker face... or was it fuck her face but they just made it sound like poker face?

Father halted his cries for a moment, staring at the clock that hanged above my window. With a sniffle, he wiped away his tears. I took a

glance at the clock, seeing it say that it was eight:thirty in the morning -since the sun was out-. I was surprised when I found out that Aot had clocks, sure it might be just as advanced as the early 1900's, if not a bit more but I always thought that the clocks people would have were going to be big pieces of furniture.

Father turned on his heel, walking out of my room while mother started to reign in her tears. Standing up she rubbed away the puffiness of her eyes with her delicate hands. I looked at my own, filled with callouses that roughened the palms while covering the dead skin that was flailing around. Small unnoticeable scars from where the skin broke on top of the knuckles and joints of my fingers, and scratched nails... Can't help it I guess.

Mother grabbed a napkin from one of the pockets of her skirt and blew away the snot that began to leak from her nose. A sniffle later, she threw away the snotty paper at the trashcan sitting in the corner of my room.

"I-I'm going to go help your father get ready for work. Take it, easy sweetie." Her voice quivered slightly, kissing me on my forehead she left my room, leaving my door slightly open. Sighing, I slowly fell onto my pillow, looking at the ceiling... I was lucky to have such caring parents, having two good families in a row was a gift... I regret all those times that I got mad at my first family. I wish I could've spent some more time with them... I wonder how they're doing? Are they alright? Has anything bad happened to them? Did they get past my death? I hope they did... They're alright... I'm sure of it.

Groaning I turned to my side -taking care not to touch my mouth-, bringing the pillow from under my head to my chest, so I could hug it. Alright then recap time, the Ackerman's are safe, the arrow wounds that Mr. and Mrs. had acquired weren't too severe, despite landing them One-Eye was a pretty bad shot. Like it would be the equivalent of landing a hit but only doing twenty damage, instead of the wanted one-twenty. The arrow missed Mr. Ackerman's vital organs, just going in one side and coming out the other, without nicking anything, so just like me, he was bedridden for the next couple of

months. Mrs. Ackerman just has to have a sling on for the rest of the month, the arrow just having gone an inch or two deep into her muscle. That's where the major injuries end, Eren's throat has healed nicely, and Mikasa just had a couple of splinters on her hands and feet.

But the experience still wasn't pleasant for the Ackerman's so they have decided to not live in the outskirts anymore. The risk of this happening once more is not one they like taking, so the three of them are moving to the town. The home that they want is just a couple of blocks away from my house. Know what that means? The Aot trio is getting together! Well more like a quad since I'll be damned if I'm not involved.

So I consider this to be a success... mostly since I got wrecked... I'm... pissed... Why was I so goddamn weak?! I had a strong start, crippling Broken Spine and breaking Broken Nose's... well nose, I thought I had that fight in the bag... But I just kept getting L after L! I got a scar on the side of my mouth, bruises on my back, an arrow to my thigh, and my face got fucking slammed against the wall! I don't know how I didn't even break my fucking nose! It... it makes me so fucking pissed!

For the past three years, I've been fucking sprinting around the town, climbing shit that shouldn't be climbed, and fighting all sorts of people that shouldn't be fought! I thought that I was good! I really did! But, in a real fucking fight... I fucking choked so god damn hard! Was all that bullshit meaningless?!... It wasn't, I would've ended up dead if I hadn't trained. Yet... yet... it isn't fucking enough! Everyone got fucking hurt! I didn't have a plan for this, I was basically running in the dark, I shouldn't blame myself... But... why did my body give up on me!? I was so useless at the end! If it wasn't for Mikasa, Eren would've died! And I was just there on the floor, fucking moaning in pain! What use am I if I can't handle some fucking pain!? I have fool-proof plans, but what happens if I can't keep up with them!?

... Stop thinking about the what ifs... stop thinking about it... It's time to start Plan 1.

Groaning, I shoved the pillow away and rubbed my face, ignoring the wetness on my arms. I dried them against the blanket. Slowly raising my body until I was sitting, I threw the blanket off to the side and grabbed my bandaged thigh, gently moving it to the edge of the bed, wincing at the sharp pains. When my foot touched the floor, I swung my other leg over and grabbed a walking stick that was laid on the floor. Using it I stood myself up putting the weight on my good leg and began to take slow steps to the door.

In the hallway, all I heard was the rustling of paper and the voices of mother and father. They were probably putting his lunch into his bag.

"Papa!" I called out. In an instance, the noise stopped, and I then felt the hard thumps of feet running.

"J?! What's wrong?!" Why are you scared? I am not a weak and frail child. I was in a life and death situation just a while ago, I'm sure that I'm doing pretty alright. I'm not going to be in pain in every single breathing instance.

I decided to ignore his panic. "Quick question, how high up are you?"

"... What?" Ok, that might've been a bad way to start it off.

"How important are you... how much power do you have?" I rephrased.

"... Once again, what?"

Sighing, I pinched the bridge of my nose. "How much power do you have at your company?"

"Oh! Well, I'm the founder."... I was not expecting that... the founder? Respect pops.

"Really?"

"Yes." You look awfully proud of yourself. Wonder what's going to happen if I inflate your ego.

"That's so cool Papa!"... Did I get you embarrassed? Because you're rubbing your neck all of a sudden and you're not looking at me. Oh? Is that a hint of red I see? ~Ara Ara~... I'm never going to say that shit ever again.

"Umm, well can I... ask you a favor?" Damn, you got serious real quick. Like all the embarrassment evaporated, and it got replaced with Levi. Please never do this again to me if I'm not prepared.

He crossed his arms. "I'm listening."

"Well, I was hoping that you could build something." Leaning against my walking stick, I pressed my pointer fingers together. This trope should work.

"Depends, what is it?" Guess not. But eh, I wouldn't fall for it either if I knew that my kid was a devil in disguise.

"... I want you to build a lift, over the gate." I said as plainly as possible.

"... What?" Get bamboozled bitch. No offense.

"I want you to build a massive lift over the gate. Like a platform that could be moved up and down."

"J... I can't do that."

Fair enough. But I kind of need you to. "Why?"

"Two reasons. One the military would never allow it. And two, why would I ever need to build something like that? I'm pretty sure everyone that works under me wouldn't find a use for it." Both of those are good reasons. But I've got two rebuttals, you literal motherfucker... why did I say that? Now I'm going to think of how the two of them had sex... AHHHHH MY PROCREATION!

"I think that they will." I say smugly.

Father raised an eyebrow. "Really?"

"Yep. What if you say the lift is a way for soldiers to get up the wall? Make it a way to save gas and make taking supplies in bulk up the wall easier."

"... That is plausible."

"And if it works out good in the end, you can make it so that people can pay to look over the walls. Let us get some more funds and allow the government to make some extra money. You already know that they're money-grubbers. I mean just look at our taxes."

"... That is also plausible."

"And if it all goes well, your company might get some more jobs you know. We can get some more money lined up. All you've got to do is suggest the idea." I rubbed my fingers together, pretending as if I had money dancing in the palms of my hands.

"... I'll see what I can do." Let's go! Plan 1 is going good!

"But why? Why do you want us to make a lift? I know that you wouldn't do it just to help the military, I know that there's something in it for you." Father abruptly said, his eyes boring holes into mine.

So when Bertholdt attacks and the gate is destroyed, I'll destroy the pulley system and the lift will become a makeshift barricade, blocking the titan's path and buying time for the civilians all to run away. It might fuck your company over a little though, but I believe you'll pull through.

"Simple, I want to see over the walls."

Father looked a little stunned, suddenly Mama rushed into the hall. "Is my baby ok?! I've got the medkit!" She even held it up as proof. Gasping, she ran to my side trying to lay me down on the floor.

"Mama?!"

"What're you doing walking?! You're going to open your wounds!"
Oi?! Why are you bandaging my arm?! Why are you bandaging my foot?! Are you trying to make me a mummy?!

"I'm fine, Mama!"

Father walked away, grabbing his lunch bag and putting on his work hat, before heading outside. "I'll see you both later. Take care of your mother J. Love you honey!" Why did you sound so much more excited when you were bidding mother goodbye? Also don't leave me!

Mama was still trying to wrap the bandages on me. "I love you too, honey!" With that Father left, closing the door.

"Stop it, Mama! You aren't even wrapping it right!"

/Two Years Later/

Ohhh, how time goes by so fast. Flowers bloom and wilt, People age and die, bonds are formed and destroyed, when the sun goes down and the moon comes up, then the sun rises once more. It is oddly beautiful that even in a world that is filled with so much evil the earth is still in a sense much more beautiful.

"Fight me, you bully!" That kid is not the definition of beauty... and no, I will not fight you. The last time I did that you made a whole scene and I got suspended. I may have beaten your ass, but mama beat mine and I'm not looking for a round two. Turning my head away from him, I continued nibbling on my burger.

"Hey! Pay attention to me! Fight me!" No. Can't you see that me and my friends are all enjoying a little outing in the town? Let Eren enjoy his bacon pancakes, Armin his pasta with chicken, Mikasa her strawberry cake, and let me enjoy my burger. Yes, they are slightly odd things to eat for lunch, but we're -they're- kids let us live a little. So shoo, go on now, shoo... You're not shooing away...

Eren slammed his fork down, standing up from his chair he pushed at the kid. "He doesn't want to! Do you want me to fight you instead!" Eren has come to my rescue once more. Thank you very much my knight in shining armor. But please don't discard your bacon pancakes, they cost me twelve funds.

"Eren! Please, calm down!" Armin, you can't be the voice of reason if there is no way for reason to be applied. Also, I feel like it would be a lot better if you didn't talk with your mouth being full and a mess. I grabbed a napkin and started to clean his face, wiping away the pasta sauce that covered his chewing cheeks. He gave me a small 'thank you' when I finished.

"Eren, Armin is right. I don't want you getting hurt." Really laying it on thick, Mikasa. Also, how have you not finished your cake? We've been here for ten minutes, and you still haven't finished half of it. I've seen you going to town on that cake. Do you only take the smallest amount of cake applicable on your fork? Are you savoring each and every bite? Because you're taking that phrase to a whole new level. Even now you haven't stopped eating!

"I can handle him!" Mmmmm Eren, you didn't get the hidden message, my friend.

"What you want to fight!?"... Are you dumb? He's man-handling you! Of course, he wants to fight! But Aunt Carla did say to take care of Eren and the others, which means no fighting. I don't know if that rule applies to me though... I'm sure Mama would understand...

Wiping my face clean with a napkin, I stood up from the table, pushing in the chair. Stretching a little I walked over to the kid Eren was still man-handling. With a cough, I grabbed both of their attention.

"You want to fight me now!?" The kid asked, pushing Eren off him he got into my personal space. Honestly man, what did I ever do to you?... I mean you deserved it. It's not cool to put glue in a girl's hair, even if it's blatantly obvious you had a crush on her. Sorry, but the

tsundere route is only available for cute girls, or in some exceptions cute boys. And sadly you are neither.

Grabbing the kid by the shoulders I stared into his eyes. Thinking about all the ways that I could hurt him. Break his jaw. Puncture his throat. Tear his ear. Gouge his eyes. Yank his hair. Rupture his stomach. Shatter his nose. Fracture his fingers. Sever a toe. Snap his elbow. Bend a knee. Smash a leg. Split an arm. Pierce his spine.

The kid got uncomfortable, shifting his eyes away from mine, and wiggling around in place, sweat even started to fall from his brow. He tried to get out of my hold but I just tightened my grip on his shoulders, staring into his soul. Murder thrashing in my eyes.

"Get away from me!" Falling from my grip he took off and ran away. Probably to go cry, in his bed. Killing intent is so cool... No I am not a weeb. It's very real, just not to the extent that an anime shows. Killing intent in essence is just broadcasting a threat, and when someone understands that they gain a danger sense so to speak. For example, if you're walking down a street at night and you see a hooded figure your danger sense spikes immediately, and it gets worse the closer you get.

That is in essence what I was doing to the kid, I made him scared. How? Well, it was in my body language, when you think you unconsciously let your thoughts be shown throughout your body and its mannerism. When I was thinking of ways to hurt him, my eyes got narrow and focused, my body tense, my lips tight, my breath slow and sharp. That kid felt me get ready for a real fight, and he didn't like that so he resorted to his instincts and decided to run away.

Of course, I didn't do this on a whim. Nope. I've been practicing this and a multitude of other things these past two years. Why? Well for training of course... and I hate to admit it but, those three bastards - more like one- left me scarred in more ways than I care to admit. They made me question myself more than I've ever done in my two lives. So I did the thing that people do when they don't have trust in themselves... hobbies and working out.

And for me killing intent was a hobby I decided to take up... Well not really like a hobby, more like an essential skill... It's also a self-taught skill... it was a hard skill.

At first, it was just me alerting animals like bunnies and birds, thinking that there was something dangerous in their vicinity. It took me a couple of weeks to get their attention -without making myself known-, since I had no idea what the fuck I was doing. But eventually, I found out that the more I wanted to kill them I became... more aggressive... or deadly? Like I was imitating the presence of a predator or something. I worked on it until I just had to glare at them and I had them scampering off. I was really excited when that happened. Doing things such as jumping around for joy and challenging the king of the forest for his title... I had to run away from a fucking enormous deer because of my foolery... At least he accepted my challenge.

Then I tried to do it on people and it didn't meet my expectations. You know when you're minding your business and then you have the feeling that you're being watched, that's what I made people feel when I first practiced on them. I questioned why they weren't getting the reaction the animals gave me, and I eventually chalked it up to humans having dulled their instincts after having to rely on their heads. Apparently, after some time, I found that I unnerve people more when I want to cause them pain. It's like controlling the urge to punch the person you hate the most, without any repercussions. It's very tempting. I almost punched children on multiple occasions.

What mama? No, I didn't punch that child. You see I have a theory that we are really never touching, we are separated by small particles that we can't see, so no mama I didn't punch that child... I still felt that slipper.

Luckily I picked up another hobby... meditation. Having two lives isn't as fun as people seem to think, and it's just not because I was born into Aot. I constantly had the thoughts of my past life haunting me, along with the fears of the future creeping into my mind... I was pretty stressed out, looking back at it. Thankfully, just breathing

slowly and rhythmically does wonders to one's mind. Makes you more focused. Calmer. Healthier. Positive. The perfect counter to Killing intent... Kind of like Yin-Yang.

So when I tried it out on people again, I controlled the urge to act out by meditating... It's difficult, to say the least. I found it similar to rotating one hand forward while rotating the other back... Not fun. I got the hang of it though, after several weeks. I made people terrified -to my joy-, after all, who wouldn't be creeped out if a child was looking at them as if they wanted to put their head on a pike. It wasn't until some months later did I fully make people... ahem... piss their pants... not literally, sadly. Nah. I actually activated their fight or flight. At that point, I forced normal humans to resort to their instincts. Killing intent for all its purposes is such a cheat. In the instances that I've fought people, I've made them far too scared to the point that they either fight without thinking, or they try to run away. Both of which open up many opportunities for me, and my martial arts.

Oh? Did I not mention that I've been practicing wrestling and boxing? Silly me. Tee Hee... What the fuck was that?

In my previous life, I've had some training in both, I considered myself an amateur. When I was reborn here... I'll be honest they escaped my head. I was having far too much fun just letting loose and being a fucking devil-child that I never really put much thought into improving actual fighting techniques. I... regret that now. If I ever put time and effort into training those two arts, I might've been better able to handle those three thugs. Might've been able to fight them more easily. This is why when I healed from my wounds two years back, I incorporated practicing those two into my training, to the point of obsession.

Of course, it was close to eight years since I last practiced, I had forgotten all but the basics, so I was incredibly rusty. I was so fucking salty when I realized I was back at beginner level. But long and hard hours putting in the work bent out those kinks soon enough. I even practiced against Eren, and I whooped his ass! He was a stain on the grass when I was finished with him! Armin and Mikasa also tried,

more like to have fun if anything, but no mercy! I pummeled those two as well!... I had to apologize to their guardians or risk getting my ass whooped by my mother... Didn't even matter, she still hit me with the slipper.

Anyway... with all the time and hours I put into perfecting those arts - along with occasional human dummies help- I'm confident to say that I'm an expert in both of those arts. Not because I'm particularly overly skilled, but because of the raw power and speed my body has.

When I recovered from my wounds I significantly increased my training regiment. What I was doing before was running around doing parkour along with some basic calisthenics, and you can't forget fighting people. I had gained an agile body, along with small but sturdy muscles. But after having nearly died, I'm still doing all that, but now I include the most complete regiment of one-thousand pushups, situps, and squats! Followed with ten laps around the town! And yes I was inspired by one punch man! But of course, I'm not a fucking psycho enough to do all of those in one sitting. No. I separate the workouts all into four sets with twenty-five reps, and once I finish those I go for one lap around the town. Then I rest until the next hour, in which I begin the workout again until I have completed it a total of ten times.

Having a strong and athletic body filled to the brim with endurance was immensely helpful, but even then it had its limits. At first, I started out strong, finishing the first set with ease, the second set I felt the burn, the third set I was trembling, and by the fourth set I had collapsed. My body wasn't used to that type of exertion, but I wasn't mad, this was a training course from hell after all.

I was so fucking sore the next day, that I was considering suicide. But one must go on with training... Where all this willpower and motivation was coming from I had no idea.

But eventually, my body got used to the stress of being pushed to its limits. Many months later, I had completed the workout ten times. I

felt at the top of the world, but I had to reign in my overconfidence. I never wanted a repeat of the Ackerman incident, just because my ego was too big. Yet I still acknowledged the body I gained, one that was filled with hard and compact muscles that bulge with veins and overflowing with endless stamina. I'm the fittest child you're ever going to see.

This did raise some concerns though. My parents and everyone else didn't think that it wasn't healthy -which was fair-, and my grades in school took a plummet. But hey at least I'm passing... most. I'll be fine. But honestly, while I'm touched by their concern I didn't let them hinder my workout. The only one that seemed to appreciate it was Eren. Constantly saying things about how cool I was, and how badass my training is, and wanting to do it too. It was a little endearing I'm willing to admit.

I've also planned on adding to stealth but as of yet I still hadn't had the opportunity to do so. Maybe when I join the cadets in a couple of years, I'll find some way to incorporate it.

"... J!... J!" Hmmm? Oh sorry I was lost in my thoughts my good friends, there is no need for you all to look at me with worry. I am fine, my comrades of war.

I waved them off. "I'm fine. Just got lost thinking. Let's just finish our food and go to Mikasa's house." The three stared at me for a little before nodding in unison. Eren returned to his seat, eating at his half-finished pancakes with renewed gusto, Armin following suit. Mikasa -the witch- still hadn't stopped eating her cake.

I walked back to my seat, grabbing at the burger that had two or three more bites until it was gone. It made me sad that it was almost finished but hey 'all good things come to an end'. Opening my mouth I shoved in the rest of the burger, chewing and savoring the taste of greasy beef. I'm so glad that the food isn't so different from how it was back home.

When we finished -Mikasa's cake actually gone-, we took a walk around the town to let the food settle some. During that time we all talked amongst ourselves with the topics being games and school. Eren and I constantly complained about Armin and Mikasa having serious dubs over our heads like medals, while the two denied any accusations of cheating. Then the subject changed over to school since I began teasing Mikasa on how she 'bullied' one little Maria. For shame Mikasa, pulling Eren away from a little girl when they were playing together. I especially enjoyed when she flushed a pretty pink when I hinted to Eren on why she did it. Her attempts to hit me were ignored as I laughed with Armin at Eren's obliviousness.

It wasn't long until we came to the Ackerman's doorstep. Knocking at the door we heard some slight scruffles from beyond before Mikasa's mother opened the door, an apron equipped, cooking utensils in hand. "Oh? Hello kids." She said with a smile that was the epitome of sunshine and rainbows.

"Hi, Mrs. Ackerman." Us three boys chorused, while Mikasa just gave her mother a wave.

Mrs. Ackerman placed her hands on her hips. "How many times do I have to tell you all to call me Aika." Oh yeah, her name is apparently Aika Ackerman, while her husband's name is Oliver Ackerman. When I first learned of this I was pretty surprised, I honestly forgot that they had first names.

I rubbed the back of my head. "Sorry Aunt Aika, a force of habit."

She huffed. "Really now? It's been months since I asked you boys to call me Aika. How much longer do I have to wait until it's not a 'force of habit'?" Wow... you are a kind, loving woman but goddamn you have some childish tendencies.

I shrugged, Eren and Armin following suit. Aika pouted. Mikasa brushed her way past her mother heading into her room. We heard her shuffle some stuff around before coming back down with a hand-made monopoly board... I've also 'made' candy land...

"Monopoly?" She questioned, holding up the board to her face as she hid her hesitant smile and small blush from view.

... I will protect you with my life, little cousin... I will ignore the fact you're older than me... along with the fact that you are a conniving lizard who only ever helps Eren whenever we play monopoly.

But sadly I cannot rage at your favoritism this time. "You guys can go ahead, I need to go back home."

"What? Why?"

"Papa wants to take us up to the lift today. They just finished building it a couple of days ago and he wants us to be the first ones to be up there." My plan was a success. After two years of constantly appealing to the idea and haggling with the government, Father and his company were granted permission to build a moving contraption on the wall. It was all over the newspaper for weeks on end, saying that it was the first of its kind. It was essentially the pride of Shiganshina. And while I'm both happy and proud of my father, I do feel extremely guilty that I'll need to destroy it in the end. It's essentially his pride and joy at this point... Alright, I feel a little less guilty now.

"What?! Can I come?!" Thing 1 asked.

"Me too! I read in a book that there's a great forest just beyond the walls, I'd like to see it!" Thing 2 asked.

"Monopoly?" Mikasa questioned.

I nodded no. "Sorry can't. Father said that he only has permission to bring along three extras. The extras of course being mother and I. Aunt Carla actually beat you all to the punch. "

"Ahhhh! Mom, why would you do this!?"

"You had to get your sense of exploring from someone. And considering that Uncle Grisha likes to stay inside the house that only leaves your mother. I heard from my mama that Aunt Carla was a bit of a scout back when she was our age." But then again Uncle Grisha wouldn't have come either way, he has a doctor's appointment out of town. And before people call me out, I've always asked him which wall he is going to whenever he gets outside of Shiganshina. And like all the times before his answer has always been 'Maria'. This time it was no different, so until the time that he speaks about going to Wall Sina, I'm chilling. But you won't believe the number of times that the scouts have left for expeditions that were also days that Uncle Grisha left for Wall Maria. Mildly alarming? Yes, but I just chalk it up to coincidences... or at least hope so.

Eren's interest piqued. "Scout?"

"Girl Scout." I corrected.

"Boring."

Oi. "Don't disrespect the girl scouts, if it wasn't for them there wouldn't even be any of those sugar-covered cookies that you enjoy. Or did you forget that they essentially rule the cookie business in Shiganshina?" Yeah, no one would expect those sweet innocent-looking girls, actually being damn devils in disguise. Yeah, they may look like sugar and spice and everything nice, but don't be fooled! That's just an illusion! Paying five dollars for a box of sugar-covered cookies might look like a bargain but it isn't! It is also an illusion! Don't let those conniving devils play on your heartstrings, they are rolling in money as we speak right now! They are disgusting enough for me to respect the name: Girl Scouts.

How do I know this? Well, let's just say me and their leader, Penelope Piper -Arghh it's disgusting just to speak of her name- have some beef at the moment...

"They're the ones that make all the cookies?" Aunt Aika asked, a strange frown adorning her features.

"Yes?"

"Little harlots are driving my bakery out of business." She grumbled, crossing her arms with a pout. Damn shame. Those snickerdoodles of yours are to die for... actually I can fuck up any revenue that Penelope Piper and her little misfits that she calls scouts make, just by boosting your bakery's popularity. Checkmate Penelope Piper.

"I'll mention your shop to the kids at school. I know that by the end of the week you're going to have a surplus of customers." If I tell them something they'll do well to do it... am I the school bully?... Nah I'm a merciful tyrant.

"Oh really? Well thank you J. ~Come here you!~" In an instant Aunt Aika pulled me into a hug, petting at my head as if I was some sort of dog... Didn't matter if the head pats felt good, I had my dignity dammit! And my reputation was going down the drain! I see you two smug bastards giggling!

With a grumble, I began pushing her off. However, the woman had an almost indestructible hold, and it didn't even look like she was trying! Okay, no need to panic. Aunt Aika acts like a child so it isn't far-fetched to believe that child evasion methods would also work on her. Managing to let an arm escape from her hold, I began to reach for the children's weak point... the armpit! Furiously I began to wiggle my fingers, digging deep into her flesh, and try as she may there was no holding back the inevitable giggles and flinches. It wasn't long until she wailed with laughter, her trap weakening for a few precious seconds, was I able to escape her deadly embrace.

Backpedaling, I bolted towards the door. Practically breaking it open, I looked back to see those two goons laughing on the ground, Aunt Aika gasping for air, thankfully Mikasa had some class to her name only looking at us with a small smile.

"I'll see you all later! Stay safe!" I slammed the door shut. Marching away from the residence, I pointedly ignored the heat that seemed to come from my cheeks.

... Aunt Aika is a dangerous woman... She has those Ara Ara vibes going for her, y'know?

"Wow..." That looks impressive... that is not an innuendo.

The lift occupied the whole gate, where on the top of the wall, lumber was nailed together on a large platform and while you wouldn't be able to see, the top platform occupied the outside of the wall too as a way to keep the whole thing steady and not tip over. From it, two pieces of lumber held up a large pulley where ten cables were already prepared and attached to a huge fenced platform that dangled in front of the gate. There were already supplies being up and loaded, with things that ranged from rations to cannonballs, and blades to gas being carried on.

"I know." Father had a particularly large smile stitched on his face, you could see the self-satisfaction oozing off his body.

"Honey, it looks amazing!" Mother complimented, her large eyes looking over the lift, taking in every detail that she could see.

"I know."... Are you?

"It probably took a lot of hard work." Carla said, marveling at the craftsmanship the lift beheld.

"I know."... Ahh, you're in a daze of arrogance aren't you. Well I have the perfect counter. Prepare yourself!

"You have a relationship with one of your workers."

"I know... Wait, what? J! No!"

"You're cheating on me, Charles?" Mother asked, the fakest of waterfall tears rolling down her cheeks. Wow. You could be an actress, you know that? If you weren't a housewife I would've

supported any play you would have acted in. Waving around flags with your face on it, and cheering with intolerable sounds.

"Honey?! No! I'm not! You're the only one for me!"

"But you just admitted it! And yet you continue to lie!" Mama wailed, wiping at her fake tears, with fake snot dribbling down her nose, and a quiver dancing upon her lips.

"For shame Charles... for shame." Carla shot father a disgusted glare, but even then I could see the glimmer of mischief hiding within those chocolate eyes.

Father looked absolutely devastated. "But I'm not! J! You little devil!"

"Don't hurt the messenger."

"What messenger?! You spread lies to the populace!" Ahhh yes you're talking about the media... what a bunch of assholes. Here and back home, they're all the same no matter which world.

"Can we go up now?" Father shot me an absolutely nasty glare, his eyes telling me that this was far from over. But he relented, -although not without a torrent of grumbles- and began to walk towards the lift, beckoning for us to follow, which we did, dramatics now over.

At the bottom of the gate, multiple soldiers were loading up a variety of things which ranged from crates that were probably filled with supplies. I was thinking along the lines of medical and rations, or maybe it could be gas tanks. It wouldn't be spare blades since they were all being carried in racks each filled by the dozens. On the platform, there were also some fancy chairs accompanied by a fancier table. Before I could question it, an entourage of colors caught my eyes. Near the corners of the platform, around ten or so people were surrounding the area, each looking like they belonged in some high-end place in Wall Sina, wearing bright dresses, and dashing noble robes, with an assortment of accessories and jewelry

that it hurt to witness. I also noticed that there was a surplus of Military Police sticking close to them.

Father caught me eyeing them. "Those are the people that oversee anything that happens to the walls, real rich folk that you don't want to mess with. I should know, they were the reason that we didn't start production until a year ago." He explained. Hmmm, okay so high and mighty posh bigots, like those guys that controlled the King of the Walls. On a side note, I was really expecting some sort of badass 'don't give a fuck ruler' from the vibes that he gave us, but nooooo we got an air-headed old man. Curse you Isayama for stealing a potentially interesting character.

Father strolled up to the snobby people, giving us a signal to stop following for a moment. The nobles eyed him with what I would assume to be slight disgust since they all turned their polished noses away from my father. However, Father surprised me since he didn't even bat an eyelash at their rudeness, just walking past them, heading towards a man behind the group, who was looking at a clipboard scurrying the pages around.

Father caught the guy's attention, the two greeted each other, the exact details of their conversation lost on me due to their distance but I could make out the words 'how's the wife' 'same old same old'. Like classic men in a hopeless marriage, which was weird considering that my father and mother had one of the healthiest relationships that I've ever seen. Hell, they still spoon-feed each other at the dinner table, it is both sweet and disgusting at the same time. Even more considering that I'm their child. The supervisor -I would assume-, wasn't as lucky when it came to his romance. Best of luck to you my brother.

I fist pumped my chest. I ignored the confused face the two present females sent me.

The two talked for a little bit more, pointing at the platform and motioning towards the people that surrounded it -including my little

group-. It wasn't until a minute or two later that my father left the guy, waving goodbye before coming at us with a little skip in his step.

"We just need to wait a bit more. The guy you just saw me talking to was the supervisor for the whole project, he says that it's safe to travel up but we just need to wait on the nobles to 'prep themselves'." Father added with finger quotations.

Y'know I wanted to be rich in the past life, just living a life of luxury and relaxation. Having a cookout with friendly neighbors, drinking a cold refreshing beer while eating some good burgers cooked on a superb grill. We would flex off our expensive cars and houses talking about our accomplishments just not to the point where it would be annoying. Say things about how proud we were of the family and how happy we were that the kids were friends feeding each other juicy grown-up gossip, all the while telling jokes that would make us laugh our ass off. Music would be blaring in the background as dogs ran in circles chasing tails, whether it be their own or others. Our young children playing tag and our teenagers moaning about their lives making, our wives talking at the gossip table playing games together. That is what I expected the rich to look like, but now... I just see a bunch of chumps with money shoved so far up their ass they expect to be treated as if they were worth millions.

I mean being rich is good, but I feel like it would be better if I wasn't surrounded by rich people. Maybe just live in a plot of land, where I build a big house... why am I even talking about this?

Woah... Flat plains rolled as far as the eye could see, the sky coming down like a blanket of blue only interrupted by the single skinny trees scattered about. I could see some ponds here and there where animals were resting. Hey, there's a deer! It's not exciting but it's a deer! There was even a forest in the distance, not the forest of Tall Trees I don't think, or maybe it is I don't know but it was filled with some huge oaks... what the hell? Squinting my eyes I saw a dust cloud forming filled with blotches of peach -the color-.

Now, what in tarnation is that? Are those titans? Are the scouts doing a mission right now?... Wait no I saw them earlier today coming back from their expedition... Fuck. Squinting my eyes I forced myself to zoom in as close as humanly possible. Of course, my eyes weren't like binoculars so I couldn't zoom in like how I imagined, but I was able to look at the front of the herd, and what I saw shook me to my bones.

... Annie...

What the absolute fuck?! What kind of motherfucking plot armor type shit is this!? Why of all of the fucking days did they have to arrive now, when the lift is barely finished?! Fuck! And we're on the top of the fucking gate!... Grisha you lying son of a bitch, full offense to your mother.

"Mama! Papa! We need to get away!"

"Huh? J?" Mama questioned, she crouched down to my level, worry crashing in her eyes. Papa followed her lead, coming down to my height and bringing down a large hand on top of my head.

"What's wrong J? Are you scared of heights?" He teased, but he was just as worried as mama, I could tell.

"We need to get away from them!" I pointed at the horde of titans. The two of them looked, I could tell that the vast number of titans filled them with unease, but the two of them brushed it off, they thought that they were safe on top of the walls... inside the walls.

"Why?"

"I have a bad feeling! We need to go now!" My parents looked at each other, talking with their eyes.

Father nodded. "Ok. Let's go."

"What the? Why?" A random soldier asked. Why the fuck you being so nosy!? This does not concern you! At the moment I'm trying to save your judging ass!

"I barely ever see my son panic, if he's panicking then he has a good reason." He explained

"But he's a child he doesn't know any better." Fuck you!

"He may be a child, but he's my child and I like to think that I know him better than you. Let's go wait at the lift." Awww, thank you pa, really warms my heart but I don't need for you all to walk and wait, and need you all to run like bats out of hell! Like fucking Scooby yabba dabba fucking doo!

Oh my god, I'm going to feel like a spoiled brat. "No!" I ran past the soldiers, running as far as I could away from the gate.

"J!" Mama shouted.

"Get back here you brat!" The soldiers gave chase, and since I wasn't going at full speed they caught up to me after a minute or two. Luckily enough, even when I was being manhandled the others followed as well, even the rich people, probably because they wanted to laugh at the impudence of a peasant but hey what works, works.

"J what's gotten into you!?" Father shouted, pushing his way past the soldiers, mother and Aunt Carla right behind him, worry exploding from both of their faces. Heh, guess they also know that something's not right with me. Glad to know I made an impact on their minds regarding how I act.

A hand came on top of my head and forced it onto the ground. Grunting, I felt soldiers paw at my body desperately trying to get ahold of my wriggling figure, but they aren't strong enough to hold me down for long. From my place on the ground, blotches of peach attract my attention, the fifty-meter walls hiding the titans and in its

shadow, the three Marleyians bound to enact their plan. A hideous feeling started to well up in my chest.

We were still too close to the gates.

A crash of lightning shook us to our core, stumbling everyone to the ground. There was some mild panic and the questioning shouts of a thunderstorm, but I knew, I knew exactly what happened. I shrugged off the soldiers and people who fell on top of me scrambling to my feet until I was standing in front of my downed family. All was quiet for the better part of five seconds, as the others started to feel unease, an uncomfortable and mildly horrific sensation creeping into their hearts. Those hearts leaped into their throats when something blistering hot and immense crashed at the top of the wall. Slowly a hulking monster of red bulging muscle rose over the wall, its hands laying on the top with steam bursting from its skin.

... Bertholdt... Goddamn... I always knew that the Colossal Titan would be big but... right here in front of my eyes... I realized how insignificant I seemed.

I trailed my gaze to everyone else, they were all frozen in place, not even wanting to make a movement or sound to attract the attention to what they thought was death. Mother and father were still as statues, spit caught in their throat. I noticed Father holding the both of us tightly, to the point where I held back a wince. Mother didn't even seem to notice.

Bertholdt's eyes snapped at us.

"Get down!" The words escaped my mouth before I even thought of them. Tackling my parents and Aunt to the floor, using my body as a shield. I tried to brace myself, but I was wholly unprepared for the onslaught of heat that attacked my back. Holding in the scream that wanted to be let out, I opted to snarl the pain away. All that mattered was protecting my family, even if I had to withstand the steam that carved its way into my back. For what seemed like ages I had to grit

my teeth and let the steam do what it bidded, but soon it lessened until all that remained was smoking out in the air.

Panting, I stood up from my family, looking down at them I felt relief flood my veins. They were ok. It seemed like I got hit with most of the heat, which was good... For them, I'm very much hurt. But at least I'm not like some of the others, out of the ten nobles I could only count six and some of them were nothing more than steaming corpses. There were still a couple of soldiers around, but from the looks of it they were about to piss their pants. Huh, so this is how the Military Police acts when faced with a titan, bunch of cowards.

"J?" Mama questioned, her voice quivering and tears brimming at the corner of her eyes. Father wasn't doing much better, the one difference being that he was clutching his fists hard enough that I saw blood dripping down his palms. Aunt Carla was shocked silent, tears already dropping.

I snapped my attention to Bertholdt... he was staring at me. My gaze met his, and within those large deadly eyes, I saw a multitude of emotions... rage, and sadness were the most prominent, but I think I could see just a hint of regret... So this is hard for you huh, Bertholdt?

His eyes moved away from mine, staring off into the town. His hands that laid on the wall crushed the top as if it were fruit, before leaning forward and bringing his leg back... so this is where the hell begins... Glad to have a front-row view...

The world trembled, rocks and debris flew into the air, dust piled and spread as if it was a force of nature. Clouding the world in a thick grey blanket, that covered the screams of the people until all that was left was silence. Bertholdt took this as his cue to leave, disappearing under the wall... at least that's what it looked like...

"Run along the wall! Hurry!" Breaking the silence, I started running in the direction of the gate that connected to Wall Maria. It didn't take long for the others to follow me, fear pouring out in gallons. I was

leading the run, with father and mother right behind me and Aunt Carla just a little ways behind. I wasn't going at my full speed -if anything it was a brisk jog- not wanting to abandon them. Once we were at a suitable distance away from the gate, I turned on my heel and struck father on the leg with a kick, I was sure that it ended up bruising. Father fell with a yell, clutching at his limb.

"J!?! What the hell!?"

"I'm sorry, Papa! Mama, take care of him!" With that, I zoomed back to the lift.

"Son!" I heard my father yell behind me. I didn't look back, those three would be fine, the military will get them down eventually being on top of the wall is the safest place right now. I need to buy as much time for the people that are down on the ground.

Running, I reached the lift. Amazingly, despite Bertholdt's destruction it was still more or less intact, Bertholdt's hands and kick had avoided anything major. The only things that were gone were some of the supplies that were stored here and the table, having fallen off due to the rumbling. Jumping onto the lift, it now had an uncomfortable shake added, it almost threw me off balance but I caught myself. Scurrying around, I grabbed an extra blade that was discarded on the floor. Hmm, so this is what I'll be using to kill titans? Nice. I also grabbed some rope that was laying on a crate, hauling it over my shoulder.

Walking up to one of the ten cables, I let loose a quick shallow breath I handled the blade in a loose but firm grip, in a second I cut the metal with a single slice. The cable ricocheted into the air, the tension it had made itself known until it laid limply, dangling over the side. I cut the next, it followed the same. The lift shuddered, creaking from left to right, I cut the next, and the shaking grew, I cut the next and the next, each cut being faster than the last until the lift was hanging on by a single straining cable. I was standing near the last cable, barely keeping my balance. Down below hundreds of feet, I saw a huge head peek through the wall.

The risk of the cable lashing at me once I cut it was far too great for my liking. The idea to climb to the top was also scratched out since by the time I reached the top to cut it off from there more titans would have made their way in. So quickly taking off the rope, I carefully caught my balance and threw the rope to the pulley above where it flew through the gap of cable and the actual mechanism, about six feet of rope was just hanging. Climbing the cable I got as close as I could to the pulley and jumped at the rope. It lurched down fast, the other end of the rope getting pulled along but before it could escape I snatched the end out of the air, halting my downfall. Hundreds of feet above the ground, I held myself up with nothing but my grip.

Looking down, the Titan had already entered the town, trailing its eyes around the various buildings, scooping out any potential meals.

"You aren't going to eat anyone today motherfucker." I cut the last cable, and gravity took its hold. The cable narrowly missed my face as it fought the air. In several seconds the lift impacted the ground, consequentially landing on the titan's head completely crushing it under a huge explosion of wood. The hole partially covered, as small beams of light could still be seen, but it would be enough for now.

Taking a deep breath I released a shout that had my vocal cords straining. "Run!" My voice reverberated through the town, breaking through the silence. Not long after, I heard the screams of terror and the trampling of feet. Good, they're not being dumb, they're evacuating, I feel sad for the ones that got killed by Bertholdt but there was nothing I would be able to do.

Looking down at the destroyed lift, the lumber and supplies were all heaped together. If anything it would weigh several tons to move. The titans would still breakthrough but it would buy time for the people of Shiganshina to retreat.

The shattering and creaking of lumber met my ears. Down below I saw a titan rise from the grave, an unnatural smile plastered on its eerie lips. It was smoking slightly and there were gashes here and there, but nothing that wouldn't stop it from moving. Frowning, I

stared at the rope that held me in the air, then back down at the titan... grimacing, I held both ends of the rope with one hand, taking the long end I used my other hand and teeth to tie the end to the handle of the blade making sure it was secured tightly before I... let go.

Gravity pulled me down with a vengeance, my heart was beating so hard in my chest that it almost overpowered the sounds of the wind. But I couldn't dwell on that. I started to spin the blade in a loop using the rope to build up the momentum, fighting against the wind. The titan appeared to become bigger and bigger and the ground]closer and closer, and it wasn't until I was only tens of feet above the titan's head, did I let the blade fly through the air.

Like a spear it flew through the wind passing the titan's head harmlessly, tugging the rope to the side the blade came back in a circle getting caught deep into its neck. I continued to fall, but now I was doing backflips in the air, taking care not to get tangled. I had to time this perfectly. When I was a few dozen feet above the ground, my arms suddenly felt an ungodly force. I kicked my legs forward, the momentum helping me and I began to swing around the titan's neck, choking it.

Hmmm... you know these things look pretty fucking terrifying but for some reason, I'm not scared. Hell, I wasn't scared of falling to my death either, which is weird since in my old life I was deathly afraid of heights... Hmmm... did dying take away my fear of death? Makes a little bit of sense, if I think about it.

Swinging in front of the titan's face, I looked at its gnarly mouth and beady eyes, smiling like a dumbass. In the corner of my eyes, I saw it raise its arms, long and meaty fingers closing in on me in an instant. Tugging at the rope I let it halt my momentum, my shoulders buckled from the sudden stop but I righted myself. As the hand closed in I was able to perch myself on its hand for all but a second before running up its arms towards its neck.

I wasn't lying when I said I had plans for my plans. I have thousands of ideas waiting to be released just for a horde of titans. And I just had to deal with one? Child's play. Sure, I was a little confused and panicked about what to do when Bertholdt attacked, but now that my mind is in the right place...

Grabbing the blade that was buried deep in its flesh, I slashed open the neck, an onslaught of steam meeting my eyes. Hmmm... the rope isn't giving me enough space for a second slice. I threw the blade around its neck in the opposite direction. Before the piece of steel could land in my palms, large hands rushed toward me. Jumping under its chin and taking the risk of it moving its head, I avoided the grab. Making my way under its shoulder with haste I buried it towards the blade as it dangled on its chest. Shooting towards its neck, I got a hold of the rope, tugging at it roughly and the weapon came flying into my hands, just in time for me to slash at its neck once again.

The titan collapsed with a groan, slumping forward as its corpse began to steam... Interesting. Standing on top of its corpse I looked down at the bloody blade in my hands. Hmmm, it's almost like I have an innate gift. I never used rope to fight, hell I never even used rope to swing from place to place. I had used little knives when I got into some street fights but never to the extent to harm someone. So to have this amount of god-level skill is... unnatural. If I wasn't the one to do it I wouldn't believe it if someone told me a ten-year-old killed a titan with nothing but a rope and a single tied blade... it's like something straight out of a generic overpowered mc anime.

I hope I'm not considered to be like that... is... this a gift from... death? Was I not reborn? Am I actually an Isekai Protagonist?... Hehe, yeah right. What's next I get a harem? Hehe, the thought is enough to make me bust a gut laughing.

I hopped down from the corpse the steam getting a little too hot for my liking, and my back was fucking killing me. I untangled the rope from the titan and bunched it up before slinging it over my chest and under an arm, making sure that there was enough space for me to

swing the blade. I started to run away from the blocked gate, the titans would break it eventually and if not, then Reiner would since he can't climb the wall if there's a blockage happening... I wonder if Bertholdt's still alive?... Wait a fucking moment... Wasn't it Dina who was the first titan to enter the walls? And unless my memory has failed me that titan I just killed looked nothing like Dina. Does that mean that she isn't being influenced by the paths?... I guess I changed something else again. Or maybe I didn't.

An explosion of wood forced me out of my thoughts, looking back I saw Reiner bursting through the walls, titans clinging to him, biting at his shoulder, and back in vicious tears. He trudged forward, digging his feet into the ground, desperately trying to escape. I was still far too close to them for my liking.

Where the hell was the fucking military!? It's been like five minutes since Bertholdt broke the wall! They should be here by now!

... Whatever, I don't need them. Turning on my heel I bolted towards the destroyed gate, loosening the ropes I had on. I caught Reiner's attention. He must've been surprised, since he stumbled a little, giving a titan a chance to latch onto his shoulder, extremely close to his nape. I hurled the blade past Reiner's shoulder and angled the rope so the blade could come back and latch around the neck of the offending Titan. It reared its head back in a roar pulling the rope back, giving me enough momentum to soar at it. I passed Reiner's head, and our eyes met, his golden met my brown.

I glanced at the horde that was behind him, thousands of titans rampaging. I wasn't scared though if the adrenaline in my body had to tell me anything I was excited. Just have to imagine I'm not fighting one thousand but I'm fighting one or two at a time, one thousand times. Like Madara.

Landing on the Titan's head, multiple hands surged towards me. I jumped from one to the other, using the rope as if it was a coiling snake. I caught fingers and arms in its snare while jumping around from one surface to the other, not taking a break or trying to access

anything relying on my instincts to pull me through. Once dozens of fingers were entangled in a bunch, I advanced towards the titan that had a blade caught in its throat, having long since stopped gnawing at Reiner. It was also desperately trying to get me, but it wasn't working out too well since the weapon hindered its movement, it was also trapped by the rest of the titans.

I avoided the jaws full of white pearly teeth by grabbing the hair that dangled by its head, swinging down to its throat. I went to the blade and untangled it, in an instant it sawed at the titan's neck as the pressure the rope was given tugged it out of the neck. Using it to my advantage I caught the handle and flew through the air, dodging each finger and mouth that came my way by bouncing around the appendages.

I was pulled to the air dozens of feet above the horde, in those few seconds of being airborne I saw Reiner making his escape, the horde just focusing on the sole human that evaded their clutches... Bastards. Righting myself in the air I started to spin the blade, throwing it into the eye sockets of a titan using its momentum against it, I soared past its head aiming for the titans behind it. I slid under its legs, tugging at the rope the blade dislodged from the other's eye and came soaring into my hand, using the piece of metal to slash the ankles of the one before me. Still sliding I jumped into the air as maw barely missed my legs, not missing a blink I grabbed onto its hair as it slid away from the others.

Jumping off to the side avoiding the dog pile of a larger titan, I turned and used its hair to haul myself up higher, I grabbed onto the offending fingers of a titan that tried to grasp me. Slicing them off I ran my way up to its arm, stopping to jump to the side as a titan bit into its arm biting away a huge chunk of the limb, rearing its head back I grabbed its hair, hauling myself to the top of its head, grounding myself and began to spin the rope around until it became a tornado of silver.

From its head, I heard the zips and whistles of gear, along with the expulsion of gas. But those didn't matter as of now what does is me

surviving. Titans lept at me, their disgusting mouths opened with their grimy fingers outstretched, all coming at me in every single direction. There was no way to retreat unless it was forged.

Keeping steady, I launched the blade at a particularly large arm, as it wrapped its hold I allowed the end of the rope to fly out of my hands until I caught the end in a bloody white knuckle grip, my muscles bulged as veins seemed to expand with blood, with a roar I pivoted my hips, dragging the weight.

A titan dozens of times my size and hundreds of times my weight was swiveled in a loop knocking the rest of the titans away from me. The blade sliced its arm and the appendage flew into the air hundreds of meters away taking me along with it. I used my strength to catapult me to the limb, and braced myself for the landing.

When the arm landed there was an eruption of dirt and rocks, as it crashed into buildings, destroying them and the streets that they laid on, sliding along the ground crushing anything that stood in its way until it came to a dead stop.

You know I've had a theory that I've wanted to test out for a while now. The Ackermans were humans that were given the strength of titans as evidently shown by Mikasa carrying three metal beams, and although their origins were never truly explained -I think- I concluded that they were eldians that were granted such powers by the King. So shouldn't it also make sense that if an Eldian trains to be as strong as a titan then it should also be possible. Especially if they trained from a very young age.

I hopped off the decaying arm and began to hurry towards the intact gate. I couldn't see it over, the buildings blocking my vision but I could see that the gate was raised... now it's being lowered. I watched as an explosion of rocks erupted from over there, it didn't take long for screams to follow... Reiner got to the gate. The other titans are nowhere close to the gate though, so the boats should have enough time to leave, and so do the people... good.

Reiner, you don't want to blow your cover so fast, do you? So what are you going to do? Retreat? Slaughter? Destroy? Bide your time? Because I promise you that whatever you choose to do I already have a plan on how to hinder you. But I'll let you hide until then, you just need to find where to... You'll still get your happy ending though, so be grateful that I'm a nice guy.

The screams of soldiers caught my attention, all coming from where the horde was. I grimaced. Those people I could do nothing to save, I am not a nice enough guy to save them, and they all are going to buy everyone else time... sorry.

I felt tremors, Reiner was running away from the gate he just destroyed. I watched as he bulldozed through the buildings destroying them as dust and debris flew into the air, before settling and he was gone... So hiding under the blanket of destruction are we?

Changing directions I rushed towards where Reiner had gone, Bertholdt and Annie bound to be with him. I know that those three would probably be exhausted by now so they would pose no threat, and I highly doubt that they have the energy to pull off another transformation.

Turning the corner I was treated with quite the sight. Reiner and co. were all huddled up together in the remnants of a house. They were all hiding behind some rubble, probably trying to bide their time until they knew that it would be safe to leave. However, I have effectively foiled their plan... not that it was that good of a plan to begin with. What would've happened if you guys waited for too long and a curious titan spotted you three? Game over.

"Hey, are you all ok?!" I asked. They all shot up their heads. They practically radiated enough fear that I could smell it... smelled like blood and gases. Huh, so that's how a shifter smells like after a transformation... neat.

Walking closer to them, I yelled. "Come on! We need to get out of here!"

Reiner picked up a stray piece of broken plywood. "S-stay back!" Dude the end that you're pointing at me is shaped like a square, you normally need to find things that are shaped like triangles if you want to do some damage. Flip it around so that the pointy end is facing me. Actually, no. Kind of depends on what kind of damage you want to inflict. Get the square if you want to do some blunt trauma, get the triangle if you want to be able to pierce flesh, although I'm pretty sure it won't work unless you put a godly amount of force into the attack.

I put my hands up in the universal 'surrender'. "It's alright... just going to lead you guys somewhere safe. Somewhere you guys can all hide together." Keyword: Hide. Quivering, Reiner made the mistake of taking his eyes off me, to look at the others. Of course, I won't capitalize on that since I'm trying to earn their trust, but I'm just saying. Also, who knew that we all share the same language. I kind of expected Marlians and Eldians to have a separate language.

The three talked with their eyes for about a minute, making subtle shifts in their movements while trailing their eyes towards me. But eventually, Reiner turned to face me once more, his shaking lessened but still noticeable. He still hadn't lowered the piece of plywood.

"L-lead the w-way."

Nodding, I slowly lowered my arms, walking out of the destroyed home. "Alright cool. We need to hurry before any titans come our way. C'mon!" I ran out of the house, looking back it took a few seconds but they came running out as well. Well more like Bertholdt and Reiner. Annie was being carried between the two of them, her shoulders being held up by the boy's arms as she stumbled her way to me. Heh. Kind of reminds me of Jesus Christ, being dragged by the Romans. Why I thought of that, no idea.

I led them through the streets, not as fast I would've wanted I'll admit but considering their 'injuries' I considered their movement speed adequate. When we were by the destroyed gate we were rushed by some Garrison soldiers. I noticed that while they looked scared they were doing a lot better than the MP that were on top of the walls with the nobles. At least most of them had composure, some looked like they were about to shit their pants. Speaking of, does the Garrison even know that my family is on top?... Shit.

I pointed towards that canal, where all the people were huddled up, trying to evacuate. It was pure chaos I might point out. "Hurry! Get to the boats!" Giving the three a little shove, I enjoyed the intense shivers that crawled up their spines. Sure, I'll let them live but that doesn't mean I'll forgive them entirely for the amount of death they've unleashed. The reason, why I'm not killing them is because I consider them children of war, children who do things that they don't want to do by their country. Sure they may not know it yet, but they'll regret it all eventually. And I just wouldn't feel right killing them. Adults I could kill, but programmed children?

I started to run off. "Wait!" I looked back to see Reiner let go of Annie's arm, -it was kind of funny seeing her flop, Bertholdt struggling to hold her up- he took a few steps forward in my direction, before stopping. Dude looked like he was struggling to say something.

Hmmm, do they need something else? I would've kind of expected for them to scurry away from the 'devil'. "Yeah!?"

"What's your name?!" He questioned, the other two looking at me.

A grin etched itself on my lips. Ahhh, of course. "J!" With that I ran back to the Garrison.

... Names Monke... J Monke... Damn missed opportunity.

"Wait! There are people up on the wall!" I shouted at a soldier. He was busy sending people off to the boats to be evacuated. So it was fair for him to ask for me to repeat myself.

"What!?"

"My family and others are up on the wall!" I clarified.

"You need to wait then, kid! We're all panicking here!" He shouted, spit flying from his mouth with each word. Disgutin-... did his spit just land in my fucking mouth?... It did... Hell no!

My temper exploded. "Aren't you a fucking soldier!? Aren't you supposed to fucking help people you disgusting sack of dribbling shit!?"

He raised his hand. "Watch your fucking mouth!" I grabbed his shitty arm and flipped him over my shoulder. He landed with a grunt, I raised my leg and brought it down. A satisfying crunch met my ears. Shaking the blood off my foot, I looked at the unconscious soldier, whose nose I just broke. Scowling, I began to take off his gear.

Another soldier ran up to me, checking on his comrade. "Hey! What the hell are you doing!" He yelled, panic running in his eyes. He went to grab me but I just slapped away the hand and glared at him as I finally took the gear off.

"Saving people." I began to put on the gear, adjusting the straps to fit my size. I was finished in less than two minutes, the gear almost threw me off balance but I was confident I'd handle it... I could handle the pain the straps gave to my back... I unsheathed the blades, and unlike my rope-blade, they had wires attached to the handle. I aimed the handles at a building and pressed the first trigger. A hook flew through the air, embedding deep into the stone... I need to hold the trigger for it to stay stuck if I release it then it comes back. I pressed the second trigger slightly and I was pulled forwards... I understand it now. Whoever said that games don't

teach you nothing was dead wrong. Also, physics is so much easier to understand in real life, than in school.

I fully pressed the gas trigger, and I was propelled forward careening towards the building. Releasing the hook trigger, I flew over the house momentum pulling me. I aimed and fired again, gas being propelled as I moved through the street getting closer and closer to the walls... Like I said before this rate of skill is unnatural... It's almost as if I was born to do this... how is it that I struggled to train with wrestling and boxing, but when it comes to this I'm suddenly so skilled?... I'll worry about it later.

Moving through the air like a trained acrobatic, it wasn't long until I was faced with the walls. Aiming up, I fired off the hooks letting them sink into the rock, pressing the gas I soared higher and higher. A minute later I flew over the top of the walls, landing in a crouch in front of my family and the surviving others -nobles and MP-.

"J?!" Mother screamed.

I waved. "Hello." Mother ran up to me, tears streaking down her cheeks. I was expecting a hug or something, but she surprised me when I felt the harsh thwack of her hand slapping my cheek. I rubbed at my reddening cheek, staring at my crying mother.

"... I deserved that." I conceded.

A few more tears fell. "You did. Oh my god! You aren't hurt, are you?! I didn't hurt you too much did I?!" Shaking my head no, it looked like mother wasn't convinced evident by the biting of her lip and trembling hands. Thankfully Aunt Carla came to the rescue as she whispered assurances and sweet nothings into mothers ear. I turned to face papa and... oh... I might have kicked him a little harder than I had intended. What I was expecting was a light purple bruise that wouldn't be too big, but... instead, it's about as dark as the night sky and bigger than my hand.

"Sorry about the leg, papa."

"I'll ground you later." He grunted.

Meh, I'll find some way to entertain myself. "Fair enough." In the distance I saw the titans begin to make their way towards the destroyed gate.

Damn, I'm on a tight schedule right about now.

I turned to face my family and the nobles. "C'mon! We need to get down! I'll carry you all down towards the canal." They all seemed to understand what I meant, and while almost all of them looked absolutely terrified they nodded.

Grinning I was about to carry my Mother, until I saw that the assembled MP hadn't moved from their spots. They hadn't made any motions of having a plan amongst themselves. Weren't even arming up the cannons that were seated on the walls edge. Ff anything it looked like they were...

... Waiting their turn...

"OI! What do you think you're doing!?" I shouted, genuinely angry. The 'soldiers' looked like scolded children, flinching away from my voice. "You're all soldiers, aren't you supposed to fight the titans or something!?"

Instead you're all waiting for me to take your sorry asses back down to the ground! How many lives could you all be saving right now! How many of those titans could be laying on the floor dead!?

One of the Mp gathered his 'courage' to speak. "We didn't sign up for this, okay! We were sent to protect some nobles and that was it! Now most of them are dead, we won't afford for the rest of them to die just because some punk wants us to risk our lives fighting monsters we weren't supposed to fight!" The amount of bullshit that is leaking from your mouth is fucking disgusting, you wretched rat-looking hooligan!

I slapped his face, knocking the dumbass to the ground. "Then why would you even sign up for the military in the first place?!" The other MP's raised their rifles drawing a panic -mainly from my family- but I've had just enough of their shit. I glared hellfire on these punk bastards, just hitting them with a smidge of KI. But it was enough to freeze them in place for a few seconds, taking the chance I swung my blade at one of their rifles, dude was so fucking startled that he dropped the weapon. I then began twirling the blade with the attached cable. The same thing happened to the rest of the MP... Yeah, I feel like they would only be titan fodder if they went down to fight.

Sighing, I pinched the bridge of my nose while reeling in the cable. "You have rifles, and canons lined up alongside the wall, not to mention the three years' worth of military training. You all are also safe at the top of the walls, they on the other hand need to evacuate. And I won't tell anyone that a kid who isn't even ten years old kicked all of your butt's without even trying. So you dimwits better be doing something productive by the time I get back or I swear to god that I will cut off those weewees between those cowardly legs of yours!" I practically spit at their faces with how loud I was yelling.

The handful of MP looked at each other, embarrassment flooring out from their cheeks. Gruffly, they picked up their rifles and stormed off to the canons leaving the rest of us to stare at their sorry asses.

Mama tapped my shoulder. "J you shouldn't be so mean to people."

"... Really, mama?"

"It is never too late to impart a lesson."

Aunt Carla nodded. "She's right."... Are the two of you for real? I looked at father, who just gave me a half-hearted shrug. Whatever, I suppose the respectable women figures in your life always know right.

Just ignore the fact you have a kickass son.

I pointed at my back. "Well get on. We need to get you all down."
The nobles all moved as one.

"Nope! Family first!" Father got the memo, he pushed mother onto my back. She squealed slightly in surprise, latching to my neck on instinct. I didn't show the amount of agony she just put me through.

"Please hold on as tight as you can, Mama." Thankfully, she heeded my warning. Didn't matter if I could barely breathe or that I felt as if a fire was scorching my spine.

Zippering down, I let gravity pull us into a freefall. I could just barely hear Mother screaming, I had to hold back the grin that threatened to appear. Zippering forwards, I speeded my way to the boats, hundreds of people were staring at me. I caught the eye of many Garrison but at the moment they were far more occupied with titan lookout and evacuation to stop me.

Yes, she would be cutting the line, but I don't bring myself to care. When we were just about over the people that boarded the boat I got as close as I could and told Mother to let go. Thankfully she complied and fell just a couple of feet. Once I was sure that she didn't hurt herself I returned towards the wall.

Just a few more... you can handle it J... Endure...

The titans were starting to move towards our location now... and fast. The cannons that the MP were using were running out of cannonballs. Didn't help that the titans were getting too close to the wall, and as such out of the cannon's range.

"Fuck." I whispered beneath my breath. Luckily I only had one more noble to drop off so that was good.

I let the guy climb my back, and I decided to say something to bring up his hopes. "I'll get you down safe mister..." Did this fucker just snort at me?! If you can't fucking tell all I need is to let you fall and

you go 'splat'! Money can't save you in this situation! All you can rely on is me and my bleeding heart you sour patch looking fuck-face!

Grumbling under my breath, I followed the same procedure I did with the others.

When I dropped the fucker onto the boat I purposefully made it so that he could miss the edge and instead fall into the water. The splash and sputters that came from him were so worth it.

I turned my attention to the destroyed gate, the titans were upon it already feasting on the unlucky Garrison. Damn! The boats still aren't ready to leave, did the titans get here earlier than they were supposed to!?

Just then the whole army of titans made themselves known, coming through the broken gate like rats, their smiles practically glowing with blood. I looked at the surviving Garrison... they were all scared stiff, most haven't even put on their ODM gear. The residents went into a full-blown panic.

Scowling, I hurtled towards the horde, yelling at the Garrison. "You're all so fucking slow!"... Shit. Hope my Mother didn't hear me.

Zippering through the air, I hooked myself to a pair of knees whipping behind them, I detached before firing off the hooks into the side of the titan's neck. Pressing the trigger I was dragged forward, and within a second I carved out a chunk of the titan's nape. As it fell to its knees, I detached and fired the hooks towards the arms of another.

Darting through the air I dodged and weaved, avoiding any limbs that came my way flying under arms, and avoiding ravenous mouths. Many titans were surrounding me, their terrifying eyes all staring at me, my figure dancing between their forms, as they showed their unnatural teeth hidden behind abnormal smiles. But I didn't let that deter me as I continued to fire off hooks making the most of the small space I had, and while I knew that it was a bad idea I relied on

the use of hit and run. Distract a titan with pain, and go to the next, there was no time for me to kill them all like a combo. I had to account for the gas that was spilling about at an alarming rate.

In a trance I weaved among their limbs, then suddenly in the corner of my vision, I saw a horrifying face with an equally terrifying smile appear not even five feet next to me. As time slowed I witnessed the titan Dina Fritz, trailed her eyes over me with what I could only describe being a speck of recognition. How I didn't know but as I watched her open her mouth by the smallest of margins my heart thumped painfully against my chest, banging against my ribcage.

Firing off the hooks, I aimed towards the ground bolting into a slide that scraped my knees bloody, but I had to for that big maw to miss my head. A hand slammed in front of me and with a grunt, I slammed into it, but before those fingers could grab me I detached my hooks from the ground and flipped myself over, not even a second later did I need to jump off as a Dina clamped down into the hand tearing it off in a gory mess.

Shit, does she have a vendetta?! Firing off the hooks into the neck of a titan, I zipped around desperately trying to escape. I was caught off guard as a fist slammed into me, the breath I had escaped my lungs as I was launched into the air... Did Dina just fucking punch me?! Thank god I worked so hard for this fucking body, if not I was certain I would've been paste by now... I think she fractured my fucking ribs!

In the air, I cast my gaze down below and... holy shit... Every titan as far as the eye could see was looking right at me. Everywhere I turned my eyes, there was already a pair waiting to stare into mine... I stared right back at them, a grin bursting from my face. Adrenaline exploded from within, my veins convulsing. The agony on my back seemed to disappear, my knees went numb, and my ribs felt as good as new!

I aimed and fired off the hooks, charging head-on into the depths of the horde, blades flashing in the light as I came down onto them, ready to show them hell. Slashing, slicing, stabbing, piercing, I did it

all as I slaughtered my way through the horde, blood falling right and left in gallons, steam encompassing the area, as more and more titans felt their bodies becoming that of slashed tires.

Zippering through their forms I moved up into the air slashing a titan's jaw off before proceeding to get behind it and slash at its nape. Jumping off I did a spin proceeding to avoid the onslaught of hands that tried to get to me, firing back at the limbs I zipped up one of the many, flying past the titans head I hooked the cable on its neck and came back with a fury, slicing its nape apart. A small chatter came from my tank, I didn't have much gas left.

Flying around I proceeded to hurtle down below, between a gathering of legs weaving through the load. Firing off my anchors at every second, I made my way deeper and deeper into the horde of legs, blades greeting the flesh of titans, but they were starting to get brittle and chipped, with metal shards flying past my face. Narrowing my eyes I let out a roar, increasing the pressure of the gas, the tank shuddering like never before, blades moving as fast as light. I escaped the horde, blades broken, gas empty, and their ankles sliced like ribbons. They fell to the ground, falling on those before them with groans and roars.

But they weren't dead. Their ankles were beginning to heal, steam flowing out of their bodies at frightful speeds. Some were beginning to rise, limping their way towards me.

Towards the my family. Towards Eren.

Fury. That was all I could feel. Pure animalistic fury. Rushing towards the mass of titans I held up the handles of broken blades, aiming the anchors to the closet neck I could see. Pulling the triggers, nothing. There was nothing left in my tanks. Nothing to propel me forward. I was at a disadvantage now.

The titans seemed to mock me. Each and every single one of them pulled back their lips, showing monstrous smiles.

... Did they think I lost?

Snarling, I dropped the handles, kicked the shoes off my feet and rushed forward. I didn't need a weapon! I didn't need any gear! I don't need nothing to protect me! My body that is all I need to rip these bastards to shreds!

From the pile of titans, one came forwards to meet me, themselves down to the ground with a sickening grin, the fingers of their hands stretched out. Grabbing the thumb, I used it to haul me over onto their forearm. The titan raised up its other arm to try and smack me into paste. Just as it was about to hit me, I proved to be faster than it by tucking down into a roll, the titans hand barely missing. With the added momentum, I was standing on the titans shoulder in the next few seconds.

With no blade to slash its nape, I used the next best weapons at my disposal. Calloused fingers sunk into the titans neck ripping apart a small chunk of flesh, showing bright red muscle. With a roar, I pierced the exposed part with my arm, digging deep until my fingernails scrapped the bone of its spine. Gritting my teeth, I grabbed the burning hot muscle from within and began to move to the opposite shoulder.

The disgusting sound of flesh being torn told me that my plan was working. Not fast enough though, as more titans began to make their way towards me. Smiles still etched on their faces. Using my free arm I sunk my fingers into the titans shoulder blades, hauling myself.

At this pace, I would end up dead.

Grounding my feet into the back of the titan, until I could feel searing blood lick my toes. I shoved my free arm into the nape until both my hands were but inches apart. I tried to grit my teeth, but there was no holding back the booming howl I released when I tore the titans nape from its neck!

The corpse I was on began to steam, falling to the ground with a ground-shaking thud.

There was a pause in the world. The titans stopped their movements. The people on the boat stilled. Useless soldiers looked on in awe.

I stared at my red stained arms, my actions beginning to register inside my mind.

... How... How... *How invigorating!*

A sensation crept into my neck. I felt it bubbling, growing stronger, until all I felt was a ball of electricity resting on my spine. And then... it pulsed. The feeling of my body catching fire, the familiar feeling of adrenaline surging-... no, flooding my veins! The world felt different. Everything felt small. Insignificant! And yet... I have never felt larger.

This sensation, this view, it was intoxicating. I felt trapped, as if I was surrounded in a haze of lightning. Everything I looked out was blurred by blinding light, but I could see perfectly, as if the flash of a camera was illuminating a picture. My limbs were heavy, but they had never felt stronger. I could feel the rushing of my blood, the beat of my heart, lungs taking in powerful breaths. Every miniscule thing my body was doing, I could sense and feel.

It was... otherworldly.

So when the feeling started to die, I began to realize where I was... In the middle of a swamp of blackened blood, surrounded by the corpses of titans. Napes torn apart.

Craning my neck, I looked down. My hands were protected by gauntlets of dried blood that traveled up to the elbow. My fingertips were gruesomely slit, with nails threatening to fall off. From the top of my chest to the soles of my feet I was covered in a suit of red, that was rapidly becoming hot mist. My hair felt matted, and there was

still blood dripping down my face, falling to the floor where it joined the ocean of red that obscured the cobble ground.

Peering into the blood... I thought that I looked like quite the devil.

Not daring to look again, I ran towards the boats. The people were looking at me in shock, the soldiers frozen solid.

Swiftly turning on my heels, I ran to the right, aiming to disappear from their sight within one of the alleyways.

It didn't take too long to find a space between two houses. There I began to take off the bloodied remains of ODM gear, unclasping the multitude of straps I let out a sharp hiss when it came off my back, feeling as if I was taking glue off my skin. Letting the gear fall to the ground with a metal clang, I tenderly touched around my chest feeling dull aches coming from my ribs. Curiously I poked at the flesh. Grunting when a harrowing throb resounded from it.

... Okay so not good... what about my back?... Yeah if the clothes scraping my skin is anything to go by I don't want to touch it.

I waited a few minutes, just to be sure that the people's attention would've changed to something else. Luckily their attention had since then transferred to their well-being, shouting to be let on the boats.

Before I sneaked my way back to the evacuates, I had decided to take a quick dip in the canal. The blood had all evaporated into thin air, but there was still mine that I had to worry about. After I had finished rinsing my body I snuck my way into the swarm, and it wasn't that hard to be let on a boat when the Garrison were yelling for all the children to come on board.

"J!" I felt a body glomp me from behind. I had to hold back the scream that I felt.

"Hey, Mama." I wheezed. Thankfully she didn't notice that I was in pain.

She made me turn to face her. "Why did you go out and worry me like that again!?"

"Sorry, Mama."

She hugged me to her chest, overwhelming me with the number of kisses that she put on my head. "Oh, you foolish boy!"

"I love you so much..." She cried. You're making me feel bad now. Please don't do that.

I hugged her back. "Love you too, Mama." We stayed like that for a bit. Until I let go, with a small smile I turned my head around, wincing at the look that father was giving me.

Father walked up to me, stumbling on his good leg. "Son..."

"Papa?" I was caught off guard by him dropping to his knees, but I accepted the embrace that he unleashed. Father's body shook ever so slightly, I felt the drops of tears fall on my clothes.

I hugged him back. "Yeah, I was worried too."

"Then don't make us worry." He choked out.

"Sounds fair." Releasing him, I turned to the final person in our group.

"You want a hug, Aunt Carla?" I asked spreading my arms out open.

"... Please." Walking to her, I hugged her stomach. She returned it, gripping my head hard, but not to the point where it would cause pain. I felt her tremble for a few seconds on multiple occasions, when that happened I'd just hug her harder. With a sniffle she released me from her hold, smiling down at me.

"J?!" A hysteric voice shouted from the crowd of people.

Turning my head, I saw. "Aunt Aika?!" She came barreling towards me, almost pushing her way past the many people in her way. Uncle Oliver right behind her.

She dropped down to my height, basically falling. "J! Have you seen the others?!" She shook my shoulders frantically. Oh damn... she looks... stressed. Her once beautiful black eyes were strained red and her usual elegant hair a mess with a mountain of dirt and dust piled on her pristine clean clothes. Yet, the thing that I gave the most attention to was the dried-up streams of tears covering her cheeks.

I shook myself from my daze. "I haven't, were they not with you?"

"No! They all left after an hour or so, I haven't seen them at all!"

Aunt Carla spoke up, panic in her voice. "Eren and Armin too?!" Aunt Aika nodded, albeit shakily.

Mother raised her hand to her mouth. "Oh god."

Everything was silent for a few seconds, but in those few seconds I've never felt more uncomfortable in both of my entire lives. "... They'll be alright, I remember them saying that they were planning on going to the canal today. The area where the lonely tree is at. They should be somewhere on the boats. " The adult's attention was all on me. Aunt Aika carefully, almost as if she was handling glass, held both of my cheeks, a new set of tears spilling from her glands.

"Really?" She asked with a fragility I've never heard come from a person's mouth... Slowly I nodded. She let out a sob, letting herself fall on me with a desperate hug. I... was unsure of what to do, so I just sort of patted at her back.

"That's a relief." Father muttered, slumping against the wood of the rocking boat. Placing his head against his hands.

Uncle Oliver slowly took Aunt Aika away from me. Dropping down to her level he tried his best to comfort her, hugging her tight to his body while stroking her matted hair. "They're just somewhere around here honey. We just can't see them."

He continued to whisper sweet nothings into her ear, and while you couldn't see her face it was obvious that she was sobbing... hard. Uncle Oliver just held her tighter, his own set of tears threatening to spill.

Aunt Carla fell to her knees, hands on her face with tears leaking from the gaps of her fingers. "Oh my god." She said, her voice breaking ever so slightly. Mother immediately crouched down to her level, doing her best to comfort my Aunt.

"It'll be okay Carla. Everything is going to be okay." She sobbed into Aunt Carla's hair.

... Huh... y'know, I never really understood the emotional impact that the people within the walls had to face when Shiganshina broke. The story was told, but it was never truly shown.

These adults, that all I've ever known as strong and caring are now looking exceptionally weak. Kind of a real mind-break really. Even if I know that the others are alright, I can't help but feel depressed... This is such a big change in my life and everyone else's that I'm now barely realizing just how much is going to happen... Something thudded in my core, and it wasn't just the broken ribs.

It was the true shock of hell hitting me deep.

... Ahhh shit the adrenaline's wearing off... fuck it all hurts...

"Oh thank god you're alright!" Uncle Oliver shouted, falling to his knees so that he could hug his little girl. Aunt Aika was right next to him sobbing into Mikasa's hair, unintelligible words coming from her mouth. Mikasa was trembling into the power hug.

"Mommy! Daddy!"... My... heart... it... fails... me... too... cute... so... heartwarming!... Shit, I almost died from cuteness overload. Sure, fight a horde of titans and I turn out fine, but the moment I hear my little cousin cry out her parent's titles, I die. On the other hand, who knew that Mikasa refers to her parents as Mommy and Daddy?... Now it makes sense as to why she never addresses them in our presence.

Aunt Aika finally composed herself enough to speak. "Thank you for taking care of them Mr. Arlert! Thank you! Thank you!"

"It was no problem, miss." Hmmm, Grandpa Arlert gives off these cozy vibes.

Aunt Carla crouched down to Mikasa, rubbing the young girl's soothingly but her hand was quivering. "Mikasa, have you seen Eren?"

Mikasa nodded, a sniffle coming from her nose. "H-he was with us. Mr. Grisha took him somewhere else. I-I don't know where though."

Aunt Carla thanked Mikasa with a wobbly smile, standing up she began to walk away. "Grisha?" She pondered.

It's that time of the day I suppose. Grunting, I stood from my spot on the ground. Mother and father thankfully went to go get food. "Don't worry Aunt Carla, I'll find both of them in a second."

"J? I couldn't possibly ask you to do that with your... injuries." Hmph, the doctor doesn't know shit. Sure he said I had to stay bedridden for the next month, but I say he's just under stress and got me mixed up with another patient. Although I will thank him for the bandages, ultra comfort I would say... Nah these things hurt like hell, but stability fuck yea!

"I'm fine." I hit my back, holding in the desperate grunt that wanted to escape. "See all good."

"It's... It's fine J... Just knowing that the two of them are alive is good enough." Say that without a sad voice next time.

"Hmmm, nope. This is a family reunion and we're still missing two members. I'll be right back!" With that, I ran out of the shelter heading off into the woods. I already know where the two went. How? Well by the tracks that they left behind. All that time practicing KI involved me having to find animals, so I studied their tracks for a while. While I was studying their tracks I decided to study humans as well. By humans, I mean Eren and friends. We all played hide and seek in the woods -not too deep though- enough that I would always find the three of them no matter the hiding place.

At the moment though I just need to chase after Eren, so not too hard.

Aunt Carla shouted behind me. "J!" I didn't respond instead, I just decided to go at full speed.

I would've smoked Usain Bolt if I raced him right now.

I knocked the back of Eren's head, he fell forward but before he could hit the ground I caught him in my arms.

"J?!"

"Hey Uncle."

"J! What the hell are you doing here!?" Oh? First time I heard you curse. Guess you really aren't in the right state of mind at the moment?

"To stop you." My words gave him pause. Conclusions started to be formed in his head with his eyes widening beginning to fill with horror as sweat began to slide down his temple. His body began to tremble, in his eyes, his horror began to disappear, and began to switch with a ferocity that I've never seen in a man. But within those eyes, there

was a definite world-shaking terror. But in an instant, it disappeared, and he fell to his knees in a slump, the syringe falling from his grip.

"... What do you know? No. How do you know?" He asked, his glasses slipping from his nose.

I crossed my arms. "I got curious about what you were hiding in the basement and it's not so hard to pick open a lock after several tries... And everything... I know everything." Of course, I'm lying since I already know everything about the outside world, but this way it'll be a whole lot easier to get him off my back.

Uncle Grisha drew in a harsh breath. "... You knew what I was going to do? Don't you?"

"Yeah. But that's not going to happen." I shrugged. I mean turning Eren into a Titan is going to happen eventually, just not on his terms.

"Are you going to try to stop me?" He questioned, raising his eyes so that he could stare into mine. An intense emotion simmering inside, something that I couldn't exactly decipher, like a mix between sadness and relief along with a hint of hate?... How the fuck am I so good at reading emotion? I sure as hell never practiced.

I stared back. "Yep."

Uncle Grisha sighed, bringing his hands into his lap holding them together, trying to comfort himself. "Thank you, J... It... I'm happy you don't want this to happen, but you must understand that there is nothing else there is to do." I stayed silent.

"I... I don't want this to happen. I don't want Eren to turn into a monster. It's the last thing I've ever wanted. But... there's nothing else that I could do." He said, biting at his lips. Sure nothing that you can do, but luckily here I am. Ta-Da.

He started to grip his hands much harder to the point that they started to shake. "Earlier for my trip... I met the Founding Titan,

and... I ate her... and killed her family." Oh. So that didn't change. Yeah for a while I thought about saving them or not, but in the end I found them to be useless to my plans, the Will of the King is not something I need to work around. Sorry, but it would be much easier just to end them and deal with Rod later.

"You don't have to make Eren a titan." I said. Uncle Grisha jumped a little at my statement.

"What?" He asked, sticking a shaky finger into his ear, and wiggling it around slightly. Was it that hard to believe that you needed to 'clean your ears'?

"You don't need to make Eren into a titan, and you don't need to die Uncle."

Uncle Grisha stayed silent for a while, probably a few minutes as I watched my words clash around in his head. "How?" He finally asked.

I started to walk in little circles, trying to copy those movements that business bosses do whenever they're presenting a grand plan of theirs. "You already made the titan serum. The one that turns Eldians into titans. Right?"

"... Yes."

I clapped my hands. "Why not just make an injection that turns someone into a Titan Shifter?"

And just like that, his hope started to dwindle ever so slightly, evident by the slight slumping of his shoulders. "... I don't think that's possible..." Hmph, I think you should have more faith in my plans.

"Really? Do you know it's not possible or are you just going off on the knowledge you already have? No. More like the knowledge the rest of the world has." I stated. And ever so slowly did his frame begin to freeze, as his brain finally started to think.

Still need to hammer in the final nail I suppose. "Uncle you and your rebellion, restorationist I think you were called. You all were still under the brainwashing of the world."

"What!?" Hoh, that riled you up.

"You are still thinking inside of the box that Marley had put you all in. At first, it was the thought that Eldians should pay for their ancestors' crimes. You all moved past that, but you are still thinking in the realms of which you all are only titans. That you are monsters that become greater monsters and not just humans. Even now you just called turning Eren into a monster and not a titan." Hmmm, shut you up real nice and good didn't I?... Fuck, I need to stop sounding like a serial killer.

Continuing my presentation. "I was never under the rule of Marley, so I think it's because of that I can say this, why not just make a serum from a Titan Shifters spine? Reading your book on the Founder Ymir, her daughters ate her spine and as a result gained the power of the Titans, correct? Well, wouldn't you be able to do the same? Just cut out your spine by surgical means of course, and since you're a Titan Shifter let it heal, and repeat the process until you have all of your spine available." I finished my theory.

"... Why has no one ever thought of this?..."

"Because to the rest of the world, it's not worth the effort to save an Eldian, better to get rid of those monsters as they would say. And like I said before you also thought this, albeit subconsciously. Well, that or the rest of the Eldians were far too scared to speak their minds." Yeah... the world is a cruel place, especially when the rest of the world is racist against you.

"... I... I don't know if I could..." He mumbled.

Dude... are you for real? I thought about this for a long time and I could find no fault in my theory. It wouldn't hurt to have a little more

hope in things, would it? "Well too bad. You're going to try. You're going to make a serum, and you're going to live!"

Girsha started to shake, visible veins bulging on his face and throat. Was he mad? "Why are you so damn adamant about this!? All this damn nonsense that you're spouting has little to no evidence that proves that it could fucking work! In these past two thousand years, nothing even remotely similar to what you have claimed has been revealed, probably because it would've never worked in the first place! And yet, you want me!? A half-assed doctor to do something like that!? It'll be far easier and far more reliable to let Eren eat me! Hell, it would be far easier to kill you and then let Eren kill me!"... Wow... was this my first anime speech?... So cool...

Besides you spoke empty threats, your heart isn't that cold. Far too weak at the moment, and I'm positive that you won't even have the motivation to inject Eren if you do kill me, that's how much you care about me. Anyhow, I think it's going to take a lot more than you trying to kill me... you in Titan Form might though, but I think I have a pretty good chance.

But, I'm not cold-hearted enough to say that so be prepared Uncle Grisha! Because you're about to be hit with the world's... no the universe's most powerful weapon!

"Because I love you, uncle." Yes, I attacked him with love!... No homo though. Not that there's anything wrong, just ain't my preference. Also, this man is in his forties or something... so yeah, familial love.

"I love you, love Aunt Carla, love Eren, the Ackermans, Armin, and my parents. I love all of you and I don't want any of you to die. So stop being so damn stubborn about the possibilities! Just trust in me and let me be selfish, let me be hopeful that it all freaking works out well in the end!" Half-Shonen protagonist and half-something else speech achievement acquired.

"... You arrogant fool... you damn fool... Alright... I'll... I'll see what I can do... Thank you, J..."

"No problem uncle. And if it makes you feel better I'll help you as much as I can." I offered. Don't know how I'll help, but I guess I could learn how to use a scalpel. I learned how to fight with rope-blade and 3-Dimensional gear, how hard would a little knife be?

"... But you don't know." That you're gay? Heh, gay jokes gotta love em.

"Know what?"

"... J... Carla... Carla... she... s-she..." Aunt Carla? What about her and why do you look like you're about to break down? Does she want a divorce? If so I'll do everything in my power to help your relationship last! I could be your marriage counselor!... I'll refer you to a professional.

"Uncle?"

"She died!"

Bullshit. But I'm not that crass, so onto the next best thing.

"Impossible."

"E-Eh?" HAH! You should see the look on your face!

"Aunt Carla was with us on the boat when we escaped. With Mama, Papa, and the Ackermans to be exact."

"What?! She's alive?! But Eren!"... Eren? What about Eren?... Why do I suddenly have this feeling of dread coming from my gut? Kind of reminds me of the, 'Why do I hear Boss Music' meme, or the '*Chuckles* I'm in danger'.

"Uncle, what did Eren say?"

"... He found a body crushed under our house... He thought that it was his mother." He said, gazing at the grass below in a daze, tears still streaming down his face.

... What the hell? A body? Under their house?... Wait a minute... Shit... If Eren found what he believed to be his dead mother... then he would've told his father... which would be the straw that broke the camel's back so to speak... then wouldn't that cause Grisha to force the Titan Injection on Eren?... Fuck! Fuck! This fucking reeks of the paths!

"Weird, probably the flower lady, poor woman... C'mon Uncle, Let's go back." I stretched my hand, sticking it in front of his face.

He stared at it for a little but grabbed it eventually. I pulled him up, watching as he dusted the dirt off himself and rubbed away at the tears that dried on his face. With a harsh sniffle, he adjusted his glasses.

"How did you find us?" He asked. Good question Uncle.

"Talked to a Shadis fellow, heard mother and Aunt Carla gossiping about him before, described him enough that I was able to make him out. After that I just kind of just had to follow the tracks you guys set." Not really but I needed an actual excuse on why I was able to find them.

"I see... Thank you, J." I turned my back, and went over to Eren, throwing him over my shoulder.

"No problem, Uncle." I started to walk towards the refugee center, Grisha right behind me. I was thankful that he couldn't see my face, or he would have witnessed the disgusting frown that formed.

So... everything after this is about to go up in a shit storm... Well, then again I'm here, so it won't be as bad as before. But damn, I'm going to have my work cut out for me.

Eren groaned from over my shoulder. I let out a small chuckle when I thought of how he's going to react when he sees Aunt Carla safe and sound. I haven't seen him cry in years so that is going to be a bit of a treat.

... Yeah everything I'll do is gonna be so worth it...

... I am so sorry for the delay.

God, I'm so disappointed in myself for bringing all your hopes up for a fast chapter, but I actually have good excuses. On April 29, -the last time that I updated the fanfic- I was feeling good, having released a chapter that I was proud of so I decided to go play soccer with some friends... I ended up spraining my thumb.

I know, I know pathetic, the injury lasted for around 2 weeks, in which the first week it was swollen and purple to the point that I couldn't even bend it even the tiniest bit, so typing was pretty hard to do -and like everything in general-, during the second week I gained enough mobility that I was able to write what I wanted to happen, you know the dialogue and stuff. It wasn't until a few days later was I seriously able to write.

But I got hampered with it being the end of the semester, I was essentially buried under a mountain of work and stress, so I didn't have any motivation to write at all. And when school finished my family actually surprised me with us going on a week-long vacation to Florida, and I didn't bring my laptop with me so no writing. And now one of my teachers hooked me up with a construction job that makes me work from six in the morning to two in the afternoon, leaving me drained for the rest of the day. Include my personal life into the equation, the need to play games and workout, I barely have any free time -or motivation- on my hands, and yes the games are necessary. So I was really busy the past month, just trying to adjust.

So sorry.

On the other hand, I feel like my hiatus was also a blessing in disguise because I'll admit you guys in the reviews are giving me so many ideas on how to continue the story. I especially want to thank a 'ylonic' for the splendid theory. I was filled with so many ways on how to continue the story, and make it more interesting because to be honest, if it wasn't for their review I know this story wouldn't be as great as I'm thinking of.

I also want to thank a specific 'Guest' for giving me some interesting ideas too and 'Alejandro' for sticking with the story, and giving me equally pleasing ideas, sorry for worrying you though, you actually gave me the motivation to finish this chapter so props to you man.

I also liked to think of all the people who thought that this story was dropped, because it gave me the motivation to prove you all wrong -no offense- so thank you for playing with my pride.

Another reason why the update took too long was because I just kept on adding and adding scenes to the chapter. In the beginning, I only wrote the recovery, friend date, invasion, and the Grisha part, and that was it. And even then I was still adding little snippets to the scenes. But then I felt like many things were lacking so here I added the training, Aunt Aika, the nobles and mp, Reiner and co, the parent meet, so that kind of just took up my time. And then you need to remember the editing, the editing process was just hell. So yeah a lot of the story was just me adding things to the original draft and then editing so that it could make sense and blend in well together.

I liked how this chapter turned out. I felt some rushes of adrenaline during the titan scenes and I hope you all enjoyed the fighting scenes since it was the first time that I seriously tried to make a whole fight, tell me what you think about it in the reviews, I'll see if I need to re-edit anything. Yet, the fourth chapter was still my favorite piece to write. I just hope that you

guys don't think that J is overpowered because I promise you that is not the direction I'm hoping for... yet.

I hope you guys liked it.

And hey, I think I made up for the delay with the chapter being over 18.5k words. Whoop Whoop?... I'll try and make it up to you guys... maybe monkey puns will do the trick?

I started to notice something with my capabilities as a writer. In my opinion, I am amazing when it comes to writing original work, like my own scenes and stuff like that, I use chapters 2 and 3 as examples. But whenever I need to write a scene that is the same as the original work I... have a deplete in creativity and motivation. I use the manga to copy the scenes and sometimes clips from the anime just to give the scene a little more description, but I feel so drained whenever I do that process. It is infuriating because I enjoy writing, but whenever I can't let my creative juices start flowing I'm suddenly at a stop. For the fight scenes, I just kind of went on auto-pilot and they turned out good. But when it came to Bertholdt breaking the wall I found it lacking. I hope with time I get better.

Updates won't come out as fast now though, with my job putting a hamper on my writing, but I promise you all that I won't leave this story unfinished.

YOU HEAR ME THE STORY IS NOT DROPPED!

Also I only check the PM box when I'm about to upload a new chapter so if you message me I'm probably not going to see it. I'll try and fix that by checking my inbox every couple of days from now on. Sorry 'ylonic', didn't see your message until today.

Also just so you guys don't get confused I am hiding J's plans, why? Well to keep you all in suspense and wondering, what type of writer would I be if I tell you all the whole plot?

Also, remember to criticize. Feedback people.

Unexpected Feelings

It was dark. Not even an inch of light could be seen through the darkness. It was honestly worrying for the handful of occupants trapped inside, they couldn't move and couldn't speak, all they could do was stare into the abyss.

Suddenly a beam of light shone from the ceiling, illuminating just a spot on the wooden floor, but even then nothing appeared to be in view. Suddenly a hand made itself known, making its fingers dance in the air, wiggling its way further into the light before an arm came into the fold. Making erratic movements as if it was a snake, before returning into the darkness taking the hand along with it.

Everything was still for the better part of five seconds before, a figure in a cloak moonwalked its way into the light. It was slow and choppy, but a moonwalk nonetheless. Once the figure was bathed in the light, they did a little twirl of their cloak letting the fabric fly with the wind.

Please ignore that there was no wind.

Clapping their hands, the person did a bow before the silenced audience. "Welcome! Ladies and Gentlemen! Welcome to my show! Now some of you may be wondering what show this is and I'll be happy to tell you! This is where I, your host, will be doing anything that I please to do for my very own entertainment. Of course, many of you have already witnessed my spectacles and have been rendered mute because of it, so if you all don't wish to have the same fate I suggest you leave by taking the exit. Which is the door towards the back." The host pointed towards the back of the room, where the only indication of there being an escape was the slight glint of hinges. But even then the captive people were unable to move.

The host waited for a few seconds, and when none moved, they did a little twirl picking up a walking cane from outside the borders of the light.

"Fantastic! I am overjoyed that you all decided to stay and watch me! Really warms my heart, y'know? Anyhow, prepare to get your panties and boxers blown away for I will be performing 'S&M' by Rihanna! Yes, the name is unknown, but I never expected you all to have heard of it! After all, how could you!? It took me weeks to remember!" The host cackled, bringing up the cane to their lips where a twisted grin rested.

The host stopped talking for a few seconds. Soon what filled the emptiness of the room was the slight tappings of their leather shoes, making a pleasant beat vibrate in the air.

"Feels so good being bad."

"There's no way I'm turning back."

"Now the pain is for pleasure."

"Cause nothing can measure."

"Love is great, love is fine."

"Out the box, outta line."

"The affliction of the feeling leaves me wanting more."

"Cause I may be bad, but I'm perfectly good at it."

"Sex in the air, I don't care, I love the smell of it."

"Sticks and stones may break my bones."

"BUT CHAINS AND WHIPS EXCITE ME-"

"J?"

"Fuck!" Singing stopped. Momentum halted. Fight or flight activated. Rushing towards my desk I disregarded my cape throwing it into the abyss. Frantically I searched along the top, letting my fingers skirmish the maple wood until they felt the small stick of matches scattered about. In an instant I rushed around the room, lighting the wall candles that adorned my walls. And what they revealed was my Father leaning on the door frame, arms crossed and a bewildered look on his face.

"Papa?! I mean... Hey Papa... how's it going?"

There was an uncomfortable silence in the room. "... What were you doing?" He finally asked. I couldn't bring myself to speak, much rather kick the dust at my feet. Hey, that rhymes, if only I had the enthusiasm to show my joy.

"... J what the hell were you doing?" He persisted.

I ignored his question. "I thought you and Mama were going into town?"

"I forgot my wallet. Now, what the hell were you doing?"

"Nothing." I said.

Papa raised a brow. "Really?"

"Yes."

"..."

"..."

"..."

My shoulders slumped. "... How much did you see?"

"Didn't see much but heard a lot. Like since the beginning."

"Oh."

"..."

"..."

"..."

"... Please don't speak of this."

"Are you joking? I'm going to tell everyone."

I felt like crying, I could already feel my reputation falling into the wishing well. "... Why are you cruel to me?"

Father just raised his other eyebrow... Fair point... Well, I guess this memory is going to haunt me for the rest of my years, joy.

"Now answer my question: what the hell were you doing?" I mumbled some gibberish that was far too quiet to hear.

"What was that?" Father questioned.

Sighing, I resigned myself to my fate. "I was performing a show to my audience."

"Audience?" He questioned. "What audience?" I pointed my finger to the corner of the room.

"The stuffed animals?" He asked, uncrossing his arms to scratch the side of his head.

O! "They're not just any stuffed animals! They are the pinnacles of the entertainment industry! Creatures that won the hearts of men, women, and children alike!"

"A lizard, a monkey, another type of lizard, and a man with a type of mask."

"Put some respect on Zilla, Kong, Rex, and Jason....And... Well, their glory years are a bit behind them, I'll admit." Of the many things that I miss from my old home, it would be the cinematic icons of Godzilla, King Kong, Jurassic Park, and Jason Vorhees... I wish I could watch the movies again.

"Never heard of them."

"You're just not cultured." Father shook his head with a chuckle.

"..."

"..."

"... So chains and whips excite-"

I pointed my cane at his throat. "Weren't you supposed to be on a date with Mama?"

"Yeah." He redirected the weapon away from him. "Just came to get my wallet, remember?" Oh yeah. Guess the newfound trauma and rage is messing with my memory.

Although I couldn't help but question him. "Don't know how you forgot it. These days you're so paranoid about wherever you put it."

Now Father looked sheepish. "Well, your Mother was distracting me." Unconsciously, he licked his lips.

I froze. He froze.

"..."

"..."

I stomped my way over to the trash can in the corner of the room and shoved two fingers down the back of my throat. Three minutes later I was wiping the excess vomit from my mouth "You're sick."

"Are you really telling me that after forcing yourself to vomit?" The cane dangerously close to his crotch forced him to drop the subject. "Love you too pal."

"Don't you have a wallet to find?" I snapped.

"Right. Thanks for the reminder." He stepped out of my room and went off into the hall.

"Hmmm." Grunting, I followed after him. The faster we find his wallet, the faster I can unleash my fury on a fucking pillow.

... I have grown more angered. The damn piece of leather was resting on the floor right next to my door frame. The only reason why Father didn't see it was because he is a perverted idiot that deserves to be castrated with salt rubbed in his wound and because the shadows of the house were hiding the wallet.

Snatching it up, I stomped my way over to Father. He was looking inside one of the kitchen cabinets. "Catch."

No, I didn't purposefully aim for his head. And yes it was a bullseye.

Rubbing his head, Father shot me a quick glare, only to grin when he looked at the large amount of funds his wallet was hiding. "Man. With so many people asking for homes to be built it's nice just to go out in the town with your Mother." He said.

"Me not included?"

He nodded without hesitation. "You not included."

"Understandable."

He chuckled. "But yeah, with the operation still a work in progress the government is breathing down my neck. Keep on asking when the company will finish. Honestly, it drives me mad." Me and you both. You and Mother have no idea how many government officials I've had to kick from our doorstep just so that they could stop

nagging. Although that might've just been the milkman on a few occasions. But then again milkmen are not to be trusted.

... Right... I need to explain what I'm talking about, correct?

The Culling didn't happen. Surprise, surprise. Due to me buying enough time for the people of Shiganshina to escape, around 99.009% of the population managed to survive the encounter. With the other .001% being those unfortunate enough to die by falling debris and the breaking of the wall, along with the soldiers that tried to fight off the titans. However, that was only the population of Shiganshina.

For the people of Wall Maria and the other three districts news came fast of the titans' attack from the hundreds of messengers that survived the breach. It took all but a week for everyone to evacuate to Wall Rose, but even then thousands of people died. While the numbers are unclear it is reported that over 20,000 died to the titans or around just less than 1% of the population.

But it was far better than 250,000 dying to retake the walls.

Sadly the government still tried to enact the culling, announcing a plan to retake the Walls with the sick and elderly being those that were required to go. But due to the vast number of Eldians that survived, they were able to see through the bullshit and the plan was met with an outrageous number of protests and riots that often escalated to brawls and fights with soldiers, mainly the Garrison and the Military Police. It wasn't uncommon for a few people to die when these things happened, mainly the protesters but even then some unfortunate soldier did lose their life to the chaos.

However, the government was still adamant about sending their people outside of the walls to their deaths.

Or were until they were attacked themselves.

On August 23, 846. Just a few weeks before the culling plan was enacted, the walls of Wall Sina were breached, not by titans but by the people of Wall Rose and Maria alike. This event was now known as the People's Breach. They stormed through the Stohess District by the hundreds, marching through the streets, causing vandalism, demolition, and assault on any that they came across. The majority of the Military Police, unsure of what to do, retreated towards Sina, abandoning the Garrison. It wasn't long until the rioters overwhelmed the Garrison, and forced the gate to open to Wall Sina.

Unfortunately what awaited them was potentially hundreds of Military Police that were itching to pull their trigger fingers. A call for peace was called but the rioters still were adamant that the culling was to never happen. A stalemate was met, that grew tenser with every passing second.

However, what the MP didn't expect was for the other three gates district gates to open as well. From there, hundreds also charged into the capital of Mitras. In their fear the MP didn't take account of any other variable any other attacks, simply assuming that there was only one breach they had gathered all of their forces to the Stohess district gate, leaving the other three all but abandoned.

Due to the panic and frankly shit training the MP received, they did the only thing that came into their frantic minds... Shoot. No one knows which soldier shot the first bullet because all that people recall was that a teenager fell to the ground... dead.

Hell came after.

People began to run, shout, and fight. All stampeding at the MP, fueled by fury. These are the people that they had to rely on? These are the people that are supposed to protect them? These are the people they should trust? These *murderers* are humanity's saviors? Unacceptable!

What happened next was a battle that lasted only a few minutes, but it was long enough for it to become bloody. It got to the point that the

MP equipped with maneuver gear was forced to escape to the sanctuary of the king's walls, abandoning those that weren't so lucky to the mob. On the top of the king's walls, the MP was forced to bear the sight of thousands wishing for their blood, rioting outside of the king's gates.

Mitras was a mess for the next three days as the rioters took refuge on the streets. Refusing to leave the capital unintended, rioting until they got what they wished: the nullification of the culling.

A week after the gates of Sina were breached, the government was forced to call off the culling. In the end, ninety-six were pronounced dead -a mix of soldiers and civilians-, with more than five hundred injured. Yet despite their losses, people celebrated on the streets, shouting and dancing to whatever beat was available. They were happy that none of their loved ones would have to die. If anything the only thing that they would die to was getting stuffed full with food and drink.

A very bad idea.

We started to notice it a few weeks after the celebrations died down. But slowly the prices for vegetables started to rise. People at first thought nothing of it simply assuming that it would soon return to their normal prices after a while. Although it was very bothersome when drinks such as wine practically shot up. But once again, no one thought anything of it.

The prices were never lowered.

Around 1.2 million people were living inside the two remaining walls, and sadly Wall Maria was where all the major farming and cattle operations were held at. Wall Rose and Sina had barely any such things, the best you could get was the small farming villages in Rose, and the private farms that belonged to the rich. And there was not enough food that they would've been able to provide to the rest... But they were forced to. They were given a surge of workers from Wall Maria hoping to help, and while the vast numbers were a great

help the amount of food they were able to produce could only provide a plate of food for less than 900 thousand people a day.

Slowly but surely, the cost of food began to climb higher and higher all the while disappearing from stores and markets alike. At this point, meat was a rare find, and if it was found it would be at an impossible price to buy. But people could still manage without meat, even if the prices of veggies were a bit concerning.

Then their prices skyrocketed.

A loaf of bread, something that you could find at the nearest baker, came to a price almost unimaginable: 20 funds... the average person gets paid 2600 funds a month.

... We were forced to face what I could only call a Great Depression.

People started to hoard up their precious supplies of food, storing them in their houses, basically taking and stealing any food from within stores. This led to businesses running out of supplies fast, and the people didn't take too kindly to thieves, as by this point every coin meant something of value. Often at times, families would end up starving in the streets, as scraps of food became the same as a five-course meal. This culmination of fears and anger led the poor to turn their frustrations towards the rich, who were hiding in their mansions, tables filled with chicken and pork with on treys of rice and salads.

Only that the rich had no such things. No one was safe from this depression. Especially the rich who were mainly made up of merchants, who suffered greatly when food became scarce. They lost their credibility and reputation, as their connections went dry and debt piled up, the rich soon joined the poor on the streets, their fancy mansions and acres of land forgotten.

The government was barely holding onto its power with such vast shortages of food, the people began to treat them as scapegoats. They didn't forget what they tried to plan with the culling. So early on the government was put into a very negative light. The only saving

grace was that the Garrison were sharing their supplies, making food centers in the town's districts, where hundreds of hungry citizens would wait for hours just for the chance of a stale bag of rations. It got to the point where more people were living in the streets rather than in homes.

Seeing hundreds of people living on the streets; the homeless did absolutely nothing to boost morale.

The government at this point was desperate. They feared the overthrow of their power, so instead of focusing on themselves, they decided to try to help the vast majority of troubled people. How? By making homes and jobs under a single company... Specifically my Fathers.

The scouts took notice that while the lift had fallen, it was only due to the cables having 'snapped', the lumber on top of the wall was miraculously unscratched, having survived the damage that the colossal titan had left. For some reason, this earned the admiration of the government, so they put the task of building homes into my Father's reluctant hands. But he was able to get the job done.

What my Father first did with the newly acquired resources was hire a multitude of people, but even with all the funded money that the government had given there was still not enough to cover the paychecks of all the new hires. So my Father gave a proposition to the government that they were more or less forced to agree if they wanted the operation to work.

For three months no new hires will be given a paycheck, but they will be built a home that they won't have to pay for the entirety of six months after they gain their home.

Basically, no one would be paid for three months, as the first hundreds of houses were being built during that time. But after they get a home, they can live rent-free for six months. Enough time for them to save some money. It was a massive success, especially when the Church of the Walls decided to get involved by providing a

bowl of food for every worker. They gained a lot of followers as a result.

So in two years, there were enough homes to provide for most of the refugee population. As a result, my family has quite a fortune. Yet we still live in Wall Rose with the rest of our friends. Reason being that my Father and I find the people from Sina insufferable.

However there are still many homes that are still being built, and homeless families are still quite common throughout the streets. My Father believes that in another year or two the operation will be finished. However, the military has seen the success that my Father had created, so with the government's permission, Premier Dhalis Zachary and his selected few were able to hold a meeting with my Father and his selected associates.

Father was shitting bricks before he left.

When Father returned he said that the military is interested in combining forces with the company to produce inventions beneficial to them. And Father decided that it was too good of a chance for his company to pass, so a few months later in some private territory in Wall Sina, the first annual convention for Humanities Inventions of Survival had begun. Otherwise known as the H.I.S. convention.

I sadly wasn't able to go because I was having a -unknown- gang war. But it was nice for Mother and Father to give me some souvenirs. Specifically, a mug that said: H.I.S. Mug... yeah I fell in love with the thing.

... Oh. It appears Father was snapping his fingers in front of my face for the last minute, and I've just now barely noticed. The embarrassment.

"Back from your daydream?" Father teased.

"No. I'm still stuck in a parallel universe where I'm a giant."

He blinked owlishly. "Did I raise you to be this weird?"

"You raised me to be awesome... This is just my own take."

"Whatever you say." Father drawled, already on the way out the front door.

"Have fun!" I called.

"Thanks, bud! You have fun too! With your stuffed... icons?"

"Cultural Representations of the entertainment industry! And I was but you ruined the mood for me!" I shouted. Father just waved back at me without another word... ass. Closing the front door, I locked it and began to head back to my room. However, an uncomfortable itch was nagging at the back of my mind. What was it trying to tell me? Meh. Maybe sleeping on it will help me.

Inside my room, I kicked at the Jason knock-off, before promptly throwing myself onto my bed. Taking the pillow from under the covers, I hugged it with a snug grip. Relaxing, I let my mind drift into the darkness of sleep... Suddenly I recalled the image of Father licking his lips...

I sprang from my bed, sprinting out of my room -knocking the rest of the icons- I rushed my way down the hall and towards the door. With frantic quickness, I struggled to unlock the door, but when I did I forced it with all my might. Running onto the street I screamed. "OI! DON'T DO ANYTHING TO MAMA!"

Agonizingly, Charles was nowhere in sight. I should've hit him in the balls earlier.

/A Few Hours Later/

"Back already?" Opening the door, I stepped to the side allowing Mother to walk in. She was carrying several bags in her hands - around six or so- all of varying sizes and different clothing brands.

"Yep!" She chirped, her face glowing -I felt a part of my soul die-, closing the door behind her, I began to take the bags off of Mother's arms, struggling just a bit to loop my arms through the handles of the bag. Mother kissed me on the forehead as a sign of thanks before beckoning me to carry the bags over to her room.

Hmmm, where's the bastard? "Where's Papa?" I questioned.

Mother opened the door to her room, allowing me to walk inside and place her bags on her king-size bed. "Well, when we were on the way back one of his workers found us and said that he had a meeting he was late for. Your poor Father was so excited about our date that he forgot he had a meeting with Commander Erwin at five! Oh, that lovable fool!" She swooned.

Ignoring her love-sick antics. "Commander Erwin? What would the two of them have to discuss? I thought that Father only dealt with the Garrison, and Military Police?" I said, taking her clothes out of her bags, I admired the designs for a bit, deciding whether or not to fold them or hang them up.

Mother handed me a hanger. "I thought so too. But if I had to have any idea it would be because Captain Erwin would be interested in the new equipment that your Father was working on."

"The motored wagon?" Or in modern terms, a car. Yeah, it was only a month or two before the H.I.S. convention but Fathers company managed to incorporate an engineering branch. I don't really know the specifics but it was mainly due to a surge of new hires having skills in machinery. At first, Father had no idea what to do with the new branch, but I may have 'influenced' him a bit...

Mother nodded, taking the price tag off of a fluffy wool sweater. "Maybe. When your Father released the plan for its development, many people from the military and all over the walls were so very interested in the idea. I've already told you this before but you should've seen the number of people during the convention. And if I had to think why Captain Erwin took such an interest in it... well,

horses do get tired and scared. It's probably led to many of his soldiers dying before." Mother isn't just a housewife, she's Father's unofficial advisor. Yeah, it was a surprise to me as well. While she isn't employed Father doesn't make any decision with the input of his loving wife. It is oddly sweet.

In my thoughts, Mother must've mistaken my silence. "Oh, I'm sorry! I didn't mean to bring down the mood." She apologized.

I shook my head. "No you didn't bring it down... just made it more interesting."

"Interesting?"

"Oh, sorry." I apologized. "Was that too cruel a way to phrase it?"

"No. It's just surprising to see you take an interest in anything that doesn't involve the other three... and violence."

I shrugged. What could I say? I turned my head to look at the clock hanging over the bedroom window, seeing that it was only five minutes left until it was three.

Welp, now I know what to say. "I'm going to go see Uncle Grisha!" I said.

"Oh? What's the occasion?" Mother asked, still putting some clothes on hangers.

"Apparently he's going to show me and Eren some cool tricks with 'the power of science' or so he says." I said. Walking into the living room, I put on my shoes that were left by the front door.

"Power of science? Sounds exciting." She said.

"Yep. Anyhow, I'll be going now, I'll be back later in the day."

"Okay! Be careful honey!" She called.

"Yeah, I will!..." Before I left, I turned back and called out. "Hey, Mama..."

"Yes?" She responded from her room.

"Can you and pa make some time for me later? I need to talk to both of you."

"Of course!" She cheered. "What do you need to ask? I may be able to help you now."

"Nah. It's probably best if the two of you are here."

Mother was quiet for a moment. "... Ok then. I'll tell your Father when he comes home from work."

"Thank you."

I closed the front door. And hopped down the steps of my wooden porch. The sun was peeking from behind some clouds. I don't think that it's going to rain today, but it might tomorrow. And while it wasn't sunny there was still a pleasant heat that hit my face. It was a bit chilly. The August air was cold enough that it was able to give me a few shivers but wouldn't warrant the need for a jacket.

Running down the last few steps, I ran up to the metal gate that separated my home from the street. It was only five feet tall at most, so with a harsh grunt, I leaped over it, just barely missing the pointed ends that were on the top. Kicking up a slight amount of dust from my landing, I took in a deep breath relishing the feeling of the cold burning my throat.

Jogging down the left side of the road, passing by the various houses that seemed to tower over the roads. I avoided the people that mingled on the streets. But eventually, it got irritating to not knock over anyone, so with a quick jump and a hop I was running on the rooftops of tiled homes.

A few minutes later I was standing in front of a quaint little building somewhere between the outskirts and the middle of town. It was only a story tall, with a sloped roof that was dwarfed in size by the buildings next to it, that only gave it enough space to form small alleys at the sides. There was a sign attached to a pole in front of the shop's door that read 'Eld's Clinic'.

I stared at an alley for a bit...

Opening the door, a bell chimed my entry. "Morning, Uncle. Morning Eren." I greeted, waving my hand at the two. Uncle Grisha was at his counter looking over some papers, while Eren was busy eating some pancakes on one of the couches in the lobby.

"Good morning, J." Uncle Grisha said, not taking his eyes off the papers. Eren waved at me, busy stuffing his face.

"So are we ready to go?" I asked Grisha.

He stared at me from the corners of his eye. "Quite."

"Cool." I took a deep breath. "Hey, Eren. Don't you think that Uncle Grisha has some pretty weird things in these jars?"

"Not really." He shrugged. "If anything they're kind of awesome. I saw a rat skull in one of them." Uncle Grisha ignored my pointed stare by polishing his glasses.

"Really? You remember which jar it was in?"

"I think it was by the ledge? Let me check." Finishing the last of his breakfast, Eren stood from his seat and began walking to-

"Frogs!"

"Huh?" That was all Eren could say before, he became unconscious.

Uncle Grisha started at me holding up a jar filled with gummies that looked like frogs. I lowered the weapon back to its original place.

"... Frogs?" He questioned.

"A perfect onomatopoeia, if I do say so myself."

Uncle Grisha just shook his head. Going to behind his counter he opened up a drawer and took off a fake panelboard so that he could grab a single key. Walking around his counter, he began to make his way towards the door that separated the lobby and the hallway. In the meantime, I slugged Eren over my back, just in time to hear the door squeak open and for Uncle Grisha to disappear.

Following behind I took note that all the wall candles were put out, casting the hall in darkness only brightened out by the shred of light from the lobby that peeked its way in. I closed the door, watching as the hall became pitch black.

There was no need for me to see anyway since all I had to do was go straight and take the only left available to find Uncle Grisha opening the basement hatch, before walking down its steps. At the bottom, he unlocked the door leading to the basement, disappearing inside.

Following him, I placed Eren on a small bed cart that was placed into the corner of the room. Adjusting Eren into a more comfortable position the mattress gave a few squeaks from its springs. It was an old thing, or if anything it was unused. But it was comfortable.

The basement wasn't overly big if anything it was the size of a garage, but then again that was all it needed to be useful. In the far-end corners of the room, there were multiple shelves filled with books and scientific journals, most of them notes that Uncle Grisha had written. And across from them was a lab table that acted as a desk -when I wasn't performing surgery on Uncle Grisha-, and multiple doctor utensils and pencils covering the top, being little details for the amazing amount of papers that were scattered about. Looking a bit closer it seemed that they were all notes involving titans, with detailed drawings of the nine along with those outside of the walls. There were even some notes about the anatomy of an

Eldian, mainly surrounding their napes but even then there were some pages that had to do with the body.

I was actually the 'test subject' for these notes.

The rest of the room was sort of bland as there was only a single chest that Grisha had on the other end of the room where he stored some drugs -failures included-, and anesthesia. But other than the bed cart and the lanterns that covered the walls, there was nothing else in the room.

Uncle Grisha was rummaging through his desk until he finally pulled a vial from the mess of papers. Inside of it was a yellow gaseous liquid that seemed to jiggle around its confinement. "You got it all?" I asked.

Uncle Grisha stared at the small piece of glass with narrow eyes. "... Yes. Yes, I do." I think he might be a little nervous... I would be too considering that this thing might be volatile enough to be a nuke if it was to be lit on fire. Maybe.

"Wow... So that's your spine?"

"Yes."

"Not gonna lie, that's a bit disgusting." I admitted. The thing looked chunky. Like vomit or sludge.

"You saw me cut myself open, matter of fact you were the one that cut me open on that table without as much as one complaint. And yet you find the liquidized remains of my spine in a container no bigger than my finger to be much more gruesome?"

"I wouldn't say gruesome... Just weird."

"Unbelievable."

"I mean how many other spines have you seen in a jar?"

"... Touche." He conceded. Uncle Grisha placed the vial into my hands. Turning his back to walk towards a drawer at the table, I gave the vial a quick shake watching the liquid slosh around the container -I think it just bubbled-. Uncle didn't see me, more focused on finding whatever he needed until he pulled out a hand-sized ebony case.,

Walking back to me, Uncle took the container once more and walked a bit away so that he could place the vial down on his desk. "Can you bring Eren to me, please?" He asked, opening the ebony case, he took out a syringe with a *long* needle. Nodding, I went over to my unconscious friend and started to push his bed cart. The thing was a bit wobbly.

Uncle Grisha stuck the needle into the formula, watching as the liquid was sucked in. Once the formula was all trapped inside, he gave the glass chamber a little flick. If anything just to confirm that it wasn't explosive.

Placing the syringe down, Uncle went to the bed and under the mattress began to unfold leather straps that were hidden under the mattress. "You understand the procedure, correct?" He asked as he gave me a strap.

I nodded while fastening Eren's arms to the cart's railing. "Yep. stick the needle in his neck and hope I don't kill him."

"No."

"I know, I know. Just joshing you."

Uncle tightened the strap on Eren's legs. "Well, please stop. The time for jokes is over."

"Sorry." I said.

We worked in silence, putting the last straps on Eren before I asked. "Were you able to separate the Attack and Founding Titans?" What to do with the Founding Titan was something that both Uncle and I

thought over for a time. Should we leave it in Eren's hands? Or just leave it with Grisha? Or maybe give it to me... We never did reach a conclusion, because we never knew how we would be able to separate the two. At first, we would've thought that we would've been able to trace the two titans in his spine, but when we first extracted the bone from Uncle's neck we had no idea how the hell we would've been able to extract either of the titans from a bone. We then thought that if possible we could extract one from spinal fluid but Uncle thought that it would've been the equivalent of removing oil from water... yet possible. But we discussed this months ago and I've been out of the loop for a bit.

Uncle paused for a moment, before finishing binding Eren's torso to the mattress. "... It is a peculiar matter." He admitted, finishing the last strap he began to walk over to his lab table. "In the beginning, we tried to separate the two, but despite our actions and experiments, we just couldn't seem to remove the Founding from the Attack. But it's only just recently that our oil and water theory proved to be successful, but I've found that I couldn't remove the Attack."

Going over to the table I stared at the multiple papers, noticing that some of the drawings were about a liquid, with paragraphs worth of details scribbled underneath the images. It honestly reminded me of a symbiote without a host.

"How so?" I asked.

"Well, I was able to trace the two powers within my spinal fluid. I'll spare you the details. When I tried to separate the attack the fluid seemed to *stick* together. And not like a sticky paste but if anything more like sticky water. It was as if the Attack was clinging on to the Founding. This is astonishing considering that the Attack not only because it values freedom above all else, but if and for it to just go back so brazenly to the Founding as if it was a child sticking to its Mother... it's shocking, to be frank." Uncle pursed his lips.

"... I don't think that this would make sense but what if the Attack is trying to go back home?"

"Excuse me?"

"Well, the Attack fights for its freedom. So what if its freedom resides in that of the Founding? Like what if it's just fighting against the world so that it could return home?"... It sounded better in my head.

"... A good theory to be sure, but it just doesn't make sense if you understand what I'm trying to say." Just say that it's a dumb theory, that might be influenced by the thoughts of me being homesick... Damn, I should really try and see a therapist. Not sure how they would help me though.

"Yeah. I didn't get what I was talking about either. Just sort of rambled."

"I understand." You probably have monologues, don't you? Science talk I would presume?

"Alright Eren, time for your vaccine... Hope you don't get any side effects as a result. Like turning into a zombie or something." Uncle looked confused. "I meant titan."

"Hopefully." He muttered.

It took Uncle Grisha a few seconds to get the precision down to the exact spot. And he might've taken a few more seconds to gather his courage. But in one fluid motion, he pricked the needle into the side of Eren's neck.

Pumping the last of the formula, Uncle removed the needle. All was calm for a minute.

Eren began to sweat and groan. "It's okay buddy. It's okay." I tried to reassure him. Caressing his hair, I accidentally touched his forehead... it was boiling hot... It was getting hotter too.

"Grisha!" I called, worried.

He had a notepad in his hands, scribbling furiously. "Don't worry, it's all going good." Really now? Because you don't sound too fucking sure!

Eren started to shake in his restraints, his throat flexed showing *bulging* veins. "Grisha!"

"Almost there."

Eren's right arm broke through the straps, his arm enlarging with so much twitching muscle that it looked like it was going to explode from his body. "Fucking hell! Grisha!"

"It's alright!" How is this fucking okay?!

Eren suddenly stilled, his arm somehow receding back to his previous state. The relief that coursed through my body was indescribable... but Eren was unnaturally still. Rushing to his side I checked his pulse, ignoring the searing pain that burned my fingers, desperately searching for the faintest thump.

A devastating terror grew inside me... I couldn't feel anything.

"Damn, this is boring." Hannes groaned. He and several other soldiers were hard at work cleaning the cannons on top of the walls. They had already cleaned more than a dozen in the past two hours. And while the sun wasn't blaring down on them, it was still far too hot to be working like this in their full gear.

"Tell me about it." Hugo groaned, cleaning the inside of the cannon with a blackened rag.

"Man, I miss those old days where we could just drink while on duty." Derick mumbled, taking a sip of water from his canteen, before passing it to Alex.

"Right. How long has it been since we could ever do something like that? Two years? Three years?" Alex asked.

"Three." Hannes answered. "Last time was the day the walls were breached."

Alex snapped his fingers. "Right. After that, the military kicked us into overdrive. Didn't get any better after the People's Breach."

"Hell. The moment my scar healed, I was forced into that new training program the Garrison had made." Hugo added, scratching his side.

"Still don't know how you survived the Armored." Hannes said.

"Was probably the old fat cushioning me." Hugo chortled. The others all shared a quick laugh.

Once Hannes controlled his chuckles, he sighed. "Damn, time flies by fast."

Derick nodded, "Yeah, my kid is already able to walk now. It seemed like it was only a couple of weeks back where my wife was nagging at me to get her some treats for her cravings."

Hannes rubbed the back of his head. "Already? Shit, I'm getting old."

"Weren't you already?" Alex teased. The other two laughed, while Hannes grumbled snatching the canteen of water from Alex.

"Laugh it up, you bastards." Taking a swig, Hannes let out a sigh. Content.

"... You ever know what happened to those four kids." Derick questioned.

"What kids?"

Derick scratched his chin. "Ahhh, the brat with the anger issues and his friends. Y'know the one that used to 'bully' you."

"Eren's group? Yeah all four of them are just fine, growing up faster than I realize. All of them are about twelve I think?"

"Oh? They still talk to you?" Hugo asked.

Hannes nodded his head. "Yeah, I see them from time to time. Normally happens when I'm not on duty though."

Derick smiled. "Really? That's nice to hear, they all still act the same? Don't really remember their mannerisms and the like."

"Yeah. They're pretty much all the same. Eren still throws tantrums. Mikasa's still quiet. Armin still likes to read those books of his. And J... well..." Hannes scratched his stubble. "I don't know what to think about that kid."

"What? Don't like him?" Alex raised a dark brow. He hadn't interacted with the four of them in the past. Sure he's seen them from time to time. Laughed at their antics. But never had a conversation with them. So he was in the dark.

"Nah I like him fine and all..." Hannes hummed thoughtfully. "But I just can't help but feel off when I'm near him."

"You sure you aren't being biased?" Hugo said. "I mean he liked to prank the shit out of us back then. The little shit. Maybe it's paranoia?"

Hannes waved off the question. "Nah, that ain't it... it's just that he doesn't feel like a kid. Hell, when I first met him I thought he was the adult out of the two of us."

"What you were scared?" Alex teased.

"No... But when I was speaking to him I felt insignificant." Hannes admitted. "And it's weird too, I remember that we were talking about

a bakery across the street, arguing which doughnut was best. It was a stupid conversation... And yet I couldn't help but feel like there was more going on." The three of them were silent, mulling over his words.

"Like?" Alex inquired.

"Like that kid was determining me." Hannes said. "My character."

"Seems a little far-fetched don't you think?" Alex said.

"That's what I thought too. Thought I was too drunk and was scaring myself... but I didn't have anything to drink that day."

"What? The kid scares you?" Alex chuckled. But he stopped when Hannes shook his head. "I wish he did, that way I would've had a reason to avoid him. But that kid is way too much fun. Always making jokes and playing harmless pranks... most of the time. It's hard to hate him."

"Didn't he get into so many brawls that no one even remembers how many it is now?" Hugo asked. He remembered that time where a merchant was annoying the hell out of him. And while he'll admit that he was a bit tipsy at the time, the bastard deserved to take a punch to the face. Only then he never landed the first hit. Neither did the merchant. That J kid actually punched both of them. It was a shame of his to admit that while he was riled up, he didn't want to fight the brat. Reason being that there was this... passion in the kid's eye's that made Hugo shiver.

Hannes snapped his fingers. "That's one of the parts where I get confused! Most would think that he was a violent devil child, and that we should pray for his parents and call it a day. But man... you should see the way that he treated his three little friends... a whole nother person." Hannes smiled. "It warmed my heart."

"Mine too." Derick grinned.

"Yeah..." Hugo sighed.

Alex pinched at a scab on his wrist. "So you're confused since he's mean and intimidating but fun, who can also be nice and caring?"

"It sounds stupid when you put it that way." Hannes laughed. "But... you just gotta meet him, and you'll understand."

"Whatever you say, Captain."

"What the fuck, Grisha!" I roared. Grabbing Grisha by his collar, I pushed him against the floor, knocking the air out of him.

"|-|-|-"

"There's no pulse motherfucker! There's no pulse! Don't you dare fucking tell me he's dead!"

"This wasn't supposed to happen!" He yelled.

"Nothing is ever supposed to happen but it happens! Save him Grisha! Save your fucking son!" Pulling him up I shoved him towards his stilled son. Frantically, Grisha started to check over his son, pulling at his body to find anything that he could decipher, anything that is going wrong with his son's body.

"No pulse. No heartbeat... But he's still burning up." Grisha's eyes scanned each crook of muscle and skin, darting left to right. Until he witnessed something... unnatural.

"What the hell?" He whispered. Eren's very veins glowed an unsettling yellow. Like a blazing fire burning inside of his skin. It almost looked like it was healing him. His grotesque arm receded back to its normal size. Eren's chest slowly began to move and his stomach expanded until with one shuddering intake of breath, steam was exhaled from his mouth.

Grisha and I stared for what felt like minutes until Grisha's knees gave out and he fell to the floor.

"Thank god..." He muttered.

I stayed silent, just content to let the relief flood through my body.

"... First time I heard you curse while I'm still next to you." Grisha said.

Slumping to the floor, I gave a mirthless chuckle. "Well, I don't curse in front of my elders, old man." He frowned, grumbling something along the lines of still being ripe of age.

"Wait..." I started. "What do you mean by 'still next to you'?"

"... You're serious?"

"What?"

"J... your first words were 'Fuck You'. I'm sure that at that point everyone knew you were going to grow up with the mouth of a sailor." He grinned... How long have you been waiting to use that saying? Ten years? Fifteen years?... Annoying phrases aside.

"Hmph." I grunted. "I was just stressed."

"A toddler stressed?" He laughed. "How absurd." I was a fucking young adult that found out he died and then found out he got reborn into one of the most fucked up anime worlds. Of course, I was fucking stressed!

"It's true!" I defended.

"You wouldn't even remember your first years on this planet." I do motherfucker!

"That's what you think, Uncle." I said cattily.

He just laughed. I opted to grumble. Eventually, we both fell silent, just listening to the sounds of Eren taking in breaths.

"Grisha." I said.

"J?" He questioned.

I stared at him. "I would like to ask you to refrain from telling Eren about the outside world."

He bolted up to his feet. "What?!"

"I know that you've been thinking about telling Eren for a while now." I said, content to continue sitting on the cold stone ground. "After all, it would be perfect since he's going to join the training corps soon. Aunt Carla still doesn't know that he's joining and she sure as hell wouldn't support it, so I thought to myself why do you support letting Eren join... the answer came to me a little after... You wish for Eren to be the first Warrior inside the Walls. Your warrior inside the government of Paradis. I'm not sure if you're even aware of what you're doing though. "

Grisha stayed silent. "Not while he's a cadet of course, no. Grisha, you want to bide your time until Eren sees what's outside of the walls for himself. To see what happened to his fellow Eldians, to see what the Marleyans have done to his people. To show him how evil the rest of the world is. That way he'll be either scared or-" I met Grisha's widening eyes. "... Enraged... enough to want to do something. Something that you'll view as great, while the rest of us would view as diabolical." Well, everyone else. I'm not exactly a saint. And I don't plan to be one.

"You seem to forget that I know what happened to your previous family, Grisha." I sighed. "What became of your late wife Dina, and of how your son Zeke betrayed you both. And to be frank, I don't blame him, I would've done the same thing." I admitted. "Grisha I see what you're trying to do even if you're not aware of it. I won't allow you to make Eren your second attempt. I won't allow you to ruin your family

again." I declared. "Please take my words seriously. While I do love you Uncle, I won't hesitate to inform the Military Police of your knowledge."

Grisha still hadn't spoken. He was just staring at me, shocked. His fingers were twitching at his side before they curled into a white-knuckled fist. Eyeing me with a look that I've seen on his son many times before. "Wouldn't that be ratting you out too?" He spat.

Glad to see your backbone resurface. Admirable. But not for this situation.

"Maybe." I shrugged. "Maybe not. But I feel like I can play the role of an ignorant child pretty well. And if not... I know I can end several lives-" Grisha stiffened, suddenly he wasn't looking at a child sitting on the ground. No. Instead, he had his back against a wall that was once several yards away. With my palm enclosed around his throat. Tight.

Struggling to breathe, Grisha strained his neck to meet my narrowed eyes. "... Yours included."

"Goddamn, that was tense." I sighed. After having said my part, I had dropped Grisha, and made my way outside of the clinic to get a breath of fresh air.

I don't feel good threatening Grisha. I love that man like my own uncle. But I had to make my point clear, that he was not to influence Eren. Not just because I didn't want him to turn into another Zeke, but also because that would have interfered with my plans in the long run. Threatening Grisha was the best course of action...

"... Regi, what's the report?" I asked. Leaning against the brick wall, I slid down to sit on the dirt and turned to stare at a man coming out from an alley next to the clinic. He was roughly around his late teens, and fairly tall. There was a bit of stubble growing around his chin and cheeks with a simple mustache already grown out. Long black hair

cascaded past his shoulders but was held together by a simple hairband. With light tan skin wearing an outfit consisting of dirty black trousers, scratched-up boots, and a ragged beige shirt. Regi leaned against the wall next to me, crossing his arms.

"There's a total of three squadrons at your command." He said. Fishing a notebook out of his trousers pockets, he handed it to me. Written inside were pages filled with the names and ages of various pre-teens, along with some physical characteristics. Flipping through the pages, I counted a total of fifteen children.

"Three? Didn't you say that I wouldn't even have enough for even one last week?"

He nodded. "I did. But that was before Tony and Geralt were able to scavenge a few orphans." Hmmm, so those two were true to their word. Guess they can still be a bit useful to me. Yet, I wonder for how much longer I'll continue to let them live?

"Tony and Geralt found orphans, eh? Question is, did those two use their usual methods of 'persuasion', and are the children willing?"

"Yes, and of course not."

Not a surprise. "How about being loyal?"

"... Mainly through fear." Threats of bodily harm will do that. "Good enough I suppose. I'll befriend them during our time then. But they can't all be orphans." Although it wouldn't really surprise me if they all were. Orphans make up a good percentage of the population for the Underground. The amount of murders that take place down there is astronomical. Families being found dead is a monthly occurrence... and single murders are a weekly kind of thing.

"No." Regi said. He beckoned for the notebook, and I handed it to him. He turned to the last page, before handing the book back to me. "Only eight are orphans. Seven however came from our ranks."

I stared at the names. Much more detailed than that of the orphans.
"Any reason why?"

"Glory," Regi said. "They want to be near 'the cause of the Totans massacre'. Or so they say." Totans -not to be confused for Titans-, was a gang that resided in the Underground...

"What a stupid title." Regi raised a brow. "... In my defense most of them joined after I killed some of them."

"Yes, 'some'-" He quoted. "Of them still are considering an uprising."

"Still?" I sighed. I thought that manner of thinking was long past us now. Like c'mon! It's been a year! And I've been a decent leader.

"They mistake you being a child for weakness."... That irks me a bit, I'll admit.

"Really now?" I raised my own brow. "Did they not witness my own capabilities? Has a year really clouded their memories that badly?"

He shrugged. "It's nothing more than petty talk. None actually have the balls to go against you, despite what they say."

"I know that... But let them know back 'home' that I wouldn't mind showing them another demonstration." Regi looked unnerved... and it's understandable as to why he would.

"Regi." He perked up in attention. "I want them to realize that I'm not running a gang. I'm running an organization. I don't need violent thugs. I need soldiers that are loyal to me. I don't want to be a cruel leader. Hell, they should know how I act considering I've been working alongside them for the past year. And I'd like to believe that they're all loyal to me... But if I find any traitors in my mix then I will not hesitate to kill them."

"... I'll let them know." He sighed.

"Thanks."

... Yeah even I think that manner of thinking is a bit harsh. But that's the mindset I need in order to succeed with my plans.

But, I can always cut some slack. "Give me a quick report on our income and what we're spending it on."

"Where's Natasha when you need her." Regi muttered. "We got our last source of income just last Friday. We gained a total of around eleven-thousand, and we've spent somewhere between three-thousand on remodeling the base. Another three-thousand is being spent to cover the expenses of housing and food." He rubbed his stubble. "And while I'm not so sure, I think that Natasha is spending another two-thousand on weapons and clothing for our lads. That's all I know. Ask her for more details."

"So we got somewhere around three-thousand left." I hummed. "Alright, make a feast for our boys. Let's call it a throwing away party for lil old me."

He grinned. "Consider it done."

I should probably go back inside. Spent enough time gathering my breath. Need to go back and wake Eren. "Well it was nice talking to you Regi, but I gotta check up on my brother." He nodded. Pushing himself off the wall, Regi made his way back down one of the alleys on the side of the clinic. Two armed men came into view handing Regi a black leather jacket that stopped right above the waist. It also had the hood of a cowl, with a single insignia engraved to the front.

"Oh and Regi." I called. The man in question turned to stare at me. "Don't let the military catch a whiff of us." I said, staring at the symbol of a Jaeger. Flying over Regi's shrouded eyes.

"So I just hit my head too hard?" Eren asked.

"Not really, I kind of got freaked out by the frogs in the jars... so I might've thrown you in self-defense."

"Frogs in jars? Aren't they supposed to be dead?"

"Supposed, is the keyword. They could've come back to life."

Eren stared. "Dead frogs."

"Dead frogs." I nodded.

"You gave me a concussion."

I tsked, waving a finger in the air. "A healing concussion."

"I think I landed on my neck. And I'm worried because the rest of my body is aching. Especially my arm." The scene of his arm growing to that terrible size forced its way into my mind. I had to gulp on my spit just to force myself from gagging. Not because it was an unsettling scene but from the amount of fear that coursed through me at that moment... I thought that he was going to lose his arm or worse turn into a titan.

"You're alive." I breathed out. "No need to be so dramatic."

"I want you dead."

I shrugged. "Fair enough." Eren scowled, he stomped his way ahead of me, making sure to kick dirt at my feet with each step... Rude.

To avoid him dirtying my shoes anymore I swiftly made my way next to him. Walking side by side, there was no need for us to talk. Because in three... two... one...

"Can't believe that it's almost time." Eren said. He can't go a few minutes without fanboying for the military.

"Excited for recruitment?" I already know the answer.

"Yeah! Three years of training before we're killing titans. I can't wait!"

"You do realize it's not that fun, right?" I said.

He nodded. "I know! People die! But as long as we're together nothing like that is ever going to happen. I'll make sure of it!" He shot me a thumbs up.

I shook my head. "Keep thinking like that, Eren. It's healthy for the mind, but a piece of advice; never delude yourself."

"What's that supposed to mean?" He asked, his mood a little dimmer.

"You'll understand when you're older."

He scowled. "And when are you going to stop saying that?! I'm older than you and I never figure out what you mean!" Don't think so. I got twenty over you in my mental age.

I dodged the question. "So is your mom on board with this whole thing? I was planning on talking it over with my folks tonight." He stayed quiet for a bit longer than my liking.

"Eren?" I said, dread leaking into my stomach. He stayed silent.
"Eren."

"... I haven't told her yet." My fingers found his left ear in a death grip.

"Were you planning to?" I scowled.

"Dad already knows!" He yelped, fighting my hand. "And he said he approves!"

Of course, he would. "But does Aunt Carla know? Does she approve?... Were you even going to tell her?"

His silence was my answer. Pinching the bridge of my nose, I let go of his reddened ear. "Eren you just can't decide that. It's not fair to you mom."

"... I know." He murmured, rubbing his ear tenderly.

"Then please tell me why you wouldn't have told her."

"You wouldn't understand." He murmured... Fuck no! I'm not going to deal with your pre-teen angst! I've been through puberty before and I'm going through it again, shit is wack. It sucks. But I won't make the mistake of being an asshole to my parents again, and I won't allow you to start!

"Eren, I've known you since before you could talk. I'm your brother at this point. I know all of your tics and mannerisms that I'm confident I could imitate you without any effort. I will understand. So either you start explaining or I won't allow you to join the military." I said, crossing my arms.

"You can't do that!" He shouted.

"Yes, I can. Want to know how? I'll keep your ass grounded in your house, you won't ever get the chance to go to a recruitment center. And every time that you try to leave I'll drag you right back to your bed. You know I'll do it."

"... Fine... I'm... I'm scared, ok." He confessed.

"Scared to face your mom?"

"More like how she's going to react. She's always worrying over me." I raised an eyebrow. "Not to the extent of your mom, but enough to know what'll happen if I tell her."

"I get the feeling that she'll cry..." He whispered.

"And that's the one thing you hate most right. Seeing your mom cry." He nodded. Damn, I guess some trauma had to come and surface back up at some point.

Six years back, Eren's grandma died due to a heart attack, alone since his grandfather died long before he was born. But it took weeks for them to take notice of her death; His grandma lived on a

small farm on the outskirts of Wall Maria, with the nearest village thirty minutes away by foot.

When Aunt Carla never got any of her weekly letters, she feared something had happened to her Mother. So the family took a little trip to grandma's house... They found her decaying body lying on the floor.

Eren doesn't like to speak of it, but that memory stuck with him. Why? It was the first time that he had ever heard his Mother cry so... anguished. He's been scared of hearing it ever since, albeit he never admitted it.

"Well, she's still going to cry even if you don't tell her. And it's going to be worse." Eren looked down at his feet. He knew I was right.

"Don't worry bud I'll be right there next to you."

"... Fine."

"That's the spirit." I stopped walking. Eren stopped too, looking at me confused until he noticed where exactly we were... at his house's gate.

Opening the gate with a creak, we walked past his pristine lawn and went inside his home. It didn't take us long to find Aunt Carla who was busy at work cleaning the frames of paint pictures that laid on the fireplace in the living room.

I slapped Eren's back "Here goes nothing, right?"

"Right." Taking a deep breath, Eren walked to his mom -me not far behind- gaining her attention. "Hey, mom?"

"Eren? J? I thought you were with your Father for the day?" She said, Placing the frame back in its place, placing the rag she was using in one of her apron's pockets.

"We finished earlier than we thought." I said. Let Eren rev himself up for a few precious seconds.

"Well since the both of you are here do you boys want anything to eat? I still have some leftovers from yesterday."

Eren spoke up. "We're not hungry mom." Speak for yourself. " Actually I wanted to tell you something."

"And what would that be?"

"I'm going to join the military."

"... I'm sorry? What?"

"I'm going to join the military."

"Are you still hung up on this?" She sighed. Bringing her hands to her hips she gave her son a long stare. He stayed silent. "Eren you're not going there."

He flinched his stone facade breaking. Ever so slightly, he began to turn his head his eyes darting to mine, pleading for me to help him.

"This is your fight, Eren. Not mine."

He stared for a while longer before turning to meet his Mother's eyes. "... Okay..." He gulped. "I'm joining the scouts."

"Absolutely not."

Eren raised his voice. "I'm joining!"

"No! And that's final!"

"Yeah! I'm joining!"

"Eren!"

"I'm joining!" He yelled.

Aunt Carla whirled to face me. "J! Please talk some sense into him!"

I shook my head, crossing my arms. "This isn't my argument Aunt Carla. This is between you and him, I'm just here to make sure he doesn't run away in case it gets too heated. The two of you need to resolve this now."

She took a step back, stunned. The reality of the situation was finally descending onto her. This isn't some childish argument, this is a talk about what Eren wishes to do with his life. How he wants to live, and if it ever happens... die. Realizing that I wasn't going to be of any help she turned to face her son. But in her eyes, I could see some form of pain, as if I had betrayed her.

Aunt Carla took in a deep breath, and shakily let it out. "Eren... please... please just listen to me. I don't want you to involve yourself in that lifestyle. I've... I've seen what joining the Scouts does to men, men far stronger and far weaker than you. And you want me to let my own son, a child, into that lifestyle? I... I just don't want you living a life filled with suffering and depression."

A silence seeped into the room, as me and Eren processed over her words, I couldn't help but agree with her in some regard. Living life as a scout is more of a punishment than a job. Doesn't matter who it is, but the chances of turning out for the worse are almost guaranteed. But then again wouldn't it all be the same regardless? If we all stayed in the confinements of the walls, then wouldn't we all suffer when at some point something we can't handle happens? We've already had a taste of it with the breaking of the wall, and the events that led to the depression.

And with the rest of the world looking at us as if we were the greatest evil in the world... dying from a titan, getting trauma from being a scout, or just living inside of the walls. It would all be the same really.

Eren was silent for another minute. "... Well, I won't!" He finally declared. " I'm different from all the rest. Stronger, weaker it doesn't matter! I'm going to become a Scout and I'm going to reclaim the walls back from the titans! And I don't need your blessings to join!"

Aunt Carla looked as if she'd been slapped. I was considering slapping Eren myself.

Eren shuffled in place bringing his hands behind his back for a moment, before crossing them over his chest. "... But I want them..." He whispered, slumping his shoulders and bowing his head.

Aunt Carla stared. Eren raised his head, his eyes never leaving his Mothers. "Mom... please just let me go..."

"... I... I can't do that." She stammered. " How could I? You're going to go off to some camp in the middle of nowhere and live such a harsh life for the next three years. I won't be able to see you, or talk to you, kiss, h-hug, and feed you. And then when all that's over you'll just be sent out of the walls to die! How could I ever accept letting you live like that!?"

Eren looked back towards the ground. "I... I don't need you to accept. I need you to acknowledge that I'm going to the military."

"The military I could accept, but the Scouts?! Please Eren! Think about your life! Join the Garrison or even the Military Police if you can. Just anything other than the Scouts!"

"No."

"Why!?" She cried.

"Because I'm tired of living in fear!" Eren roared.

Raising his head to glare at his Mother, his temper surfacing. "Each time I look at the walls, I don't see them protecting me or anybody else. All I see is them delaying our deaths! Trapping us like birds

inside a cage! Just look at what happened! They were breached! Those walls don't save anybody! The only reason why more people aren't dead is because of J!" He pointed at me, his arms shaking with anger.

"And you want me to keep on living inside of them?" He questioned, scoffing at the very idea. "You want me to join a branch that just watches over the walls and makes sure it stays clean? Or another that just lays around all day inside of Sina, if they aren't spending their time killing us! They don't do anything to ease me! The only people who actually make an effort to keep us safe are the scouts! The only people who keep my family safe are the scouts! The only people that are actually worth a damn are the scouts!" He yelled, clenching his hands so hard that his knuckles turned white.

"It would be better to die knowing that I tried to keep everyone safe, rather than to see everyone around me be eaten because I was a damn coward!" He shouted, panting and trying to reclaim his breath. There was a bit of sweat falling from his brow, trailing down towards his eyes. Yet his gaze didn't lose an ounce of intensity.

Aunt Carla looked away, biting her lip. "... I'd rather you be a coward that's alive... and not *my* dead son..."

Eren grunted, looking away. "I knew you wouldn't understand..."

"I don't. And I never will."... No, she understands just fine.

Eren took in a deep shaky breath. "... As I said before I don't need your blessings-"

"And you will never have them." She snapped. Eren flinched, gritting his teeth as his eyes grew the slightest bit misty. "... But I'll allow you to go." She breathed out.

Eren snapped his head. "Mom?"

"I won't repeat myself twice. But it's just like your father says, there's no way to change that stubborn mind of yours... without hurting us." She murmured.

Eren couldn't say anything, words stuck in his throat. Aunt Carla didn't meet his gaze. And I already knew why. Tears were beginning to form at the corners of her eyes.

"... Please leave me alone for a moment honey... I just... I just need some time to process it."

"... Me too." Eren mumbled. He already knew that his Mother was going to cry... And he hates the fact that it's because of him. Spinning on his heel he lumbered his way out of the house, but before he could close the door behind him I called out to him.

"I'll catch up. Just go to our new spot." As he shut the door, I couldn't tell whether Eren heard me or not.

Aunt Carla in the meantime had moved to a spot on one of the couches, her head in her hands. Making my way over to her, I sat on the cushion next to her and gave her a hug, that she practically melted into.

She turned to stare at me. "... Are you also joining?" I nodded.

"Well, that makes sense." She mumbled, tears starting to flow from her eyes like rivers.

I rubbed circles on her back. "I'll protect him, Aunt Carla."

"... I... I wish that I could believe that... But the fear of him dying will never leave me. No matter how skilled or protected he is, the chance of him dying will always be there." She said, her voice beginning to break.

"It will."

"I don't want my baby to die." She cried. "I don't want anyone else to die."

"..."

Hugging Aunt Carla feeling the trail of tears seep into my shirt, I was honestly at a loss on what to say. I was never the best at comforting people in my old life since I could never relate to their troubles, but I could try to understand. But I could never figure out what words to put them at ease. And in this situation, I find it extremely difficult to find something, anything that'll help relieve my aunt of the fear that she's facing.

Of course, nothing comes to mind, but maybe telling her what'll happen to us, gives her some reassurance. "I can't promise you that some things won't happen. We might come back changed, but we'll all be happy in the end."

And like always it seems that my words did nothing. She only cried harder. I was probably sitting next to her for ten minutes before her tears ran dry. And even then it looked like she still wanted to cry. Puffy red eyes, and snot threatening to spill out from her nose... it was the worst I've seen her in a while.

Standing up, I softly took Aunt Carla's head and laid her against the soft cushion of the sofa. She offered no resistance, opting to instead get comfortable, hugging one of the couch pillows tightly to her chest.

Sighing, I walked to her room intent on finding a blanket that'll cover her up. The door was already open, pushing it to the side. I admired how neat it all looked. The corners of the bed were made, tucked into the side of the mattress with four velvet pillows laying underneath the white silk covers. The floor was practically spotless, when I stared down I could just barely see the reflection of my own eyes. The only window was spotless, and the curtains that covered looked brand new. Hell, the counter that had all of their accessories and makeup were placed in a way that made it seem as if they were

always meant to be in that spot. Honestly, the room gave me some perfect happily-ever-after vibes... If only the two people that shared this room could feel this way. Perfect.

The closet was in the corner of the room, evident by the opened wooden doors showcasing an assortment of different colored fabrics. And on the shelf of the closet, there was a small number of blankets, all neatly folded. Jumping to grab one, I hauled it over my shoulder and back to Aunt Carla, still in the spot where I left her.

Unfurling the blanket over her, I made sure to tuck the comfy cloth into the crook of her neck. She gave me a meek. "Thank you."

Nodding, I began to head out. But before I left, I couldn't help but say some departing words. "Take some rest, Aunt Carla... And... Just let it out." I closed the door behind me.

... Should've just left quietly.

Walking down identical stone steps, onto the street below there was a heavy weight on my shoulders. I hated making Aunt Carla feel this way. Hated threatening Grisha. And I just hate what else is going to happen later in the day.

Especially since I'm going to tell *my* parents.

"I'm home!" Opening the door to my house, I was met with both Mother and Father sitting at the kitchen table, coffee in cups with baked sweets on a plate... it was barely out of the oven.

"Welcome back sweetie!" Mother called out, while Father just raised his mug in greeting more intent on focusing on the newspaper that he had. Mother stood from her seat and came to hug me like she always did when I came back home.

"... J, why is your shirt wet?" Stiffening in her embrace, I now realized how damp my shirt felt. Mother cupped my cheeks forcing

me to look into her worried eyes.

"What's wrong?" She asked... It's amazing how much you can tell about me. There are times when I come home covered in dirt and blood, and you scold me. Already knowing that I got into a fight... I'm just a little wet and you already know that I'm not in the right state of mind.

I should just get this over with.

"... I'm joining the scouts." Mother stiffened. Father froze. I tensed.

"Please don't..." Mother whispered into my ear. But her voice reverberated throughout the whole house.

"Mama?"

She flung herself at me, Hugging me with a desperate death grip.

"Please don't! Please don't go!" She cried, tears already beginning to form in the corners of her eyes.

It hurt.

"Mama..." I said softly. "I'm going to need to."

"Why? For what reason." Father cut in, his voice sharp.

I looked at him, wanting to divert my attention from my frantic Mother. He had placed down his newspaper and had pulled his chair so that he was facing me. His fingers were interlocked, resting on his lap with his head bowed.

"Because Eren's going to." I said.

Father took in a deep breath of air. "That damn fool." He mumbled.

Mother spoke up, forcing my attention back to her. Tears were streaming down her face, and her lip was trembling. "J please reconsider! Please don't. You're still too young to go off to the

military! You still haven't graduated from school! You're barely even twelve!"

"Mama... I'm going to need to join." She opened her mouth to speak, but Father spoke before she could. "Because you want to protect your friends. Don't you?" He said.

I nodded. It was more than that, but that was one of my main driving points.

Father stood up. I thought that he was going to walk towards me. Instead, he picked up his mug and carried it over to the sink, where he dumped out its steaming contents. It was coffee. His favorite.

"You were never a normal kid." He said lightly, turning on the faucet he began to rinse the sink. "Didn't like the same things other kids your age liked. Hell, even Eren always had some baby qualities to him. But you never did." Turning off the water, he wiped his hands dry.

Once done, he turned back to face me once more. "When you were still a little child, all I remember is you acting like a guardian for Eren. Teaching him how to walk, how to speak, how to draw... how to fight. All you've been doing is helping him. Even when you added Armin and Mikasa to your little group, you never did stop helping."

He sighed. "I was worried I'll admit. I thought you weren't living your life. I even felt a little angry at those three too. I thought they were dragging you from fully enjoying yourself. But it wasn't until after the wall was first breached when you ran back to where the colossal appeared and until after you fought that horde did I finally start to realize." Father met my gaze. "You've been protecting them, haven't you? Protecting us."

He began to close the distance. "You're my son, and it's my job to know what you like and hate. So I know that if you had the choice you wouldn't ever join the military. You hate the way that those officials act." He let out a small chuckle. "Just like your old man, I

suppose... Yet here you are telling us that you're going to follow the orders of the people that annoy you. You've always been a big fan of your freedom, so following orders doesn't seem right up your alley."

He stood in front of me. "I hate it." He... H-He whimpered. "I hate knowing that we can't change your mind, no matter how much we beg or cry you're going to stay protecting those three. Always go where they go, teaching them along the way, helping them fight their battles..." He pulled me and Mother into a tight embrace. "Till the bitter end too, huh?"

I was dead still.

"J." Father said, pulling away ever so slightly to peer into my eyes. "Your Mother and I... we don't want you to go. We know you're capable of protecting yourself, but are you able to do that while helping others? It's something that we won't ever know until you come back home, or until Commander Erwin sends us a letter."

Mother raised her head from where it was buried. Her eyes were red, Tears streaming. Cheeks flushed hotly. Lips trembling. Brows creased. Shoulders shaking. Snot dripping. "We'll let you go honey. But... But please don't..." Mother bit her lip. "Just do what you need to do sweetie." She sobbed.

... I couldn't say anything. I can't say anything. What should I say? How do I ease their worries? I don't know how. They know my strength. And yet they worry. They panic. They cry. Why? I understand why. Because they're human, and they love me. But still, why fret? How can I relieve them of this pain? Why don't I know how? Did I know how before? Did I ever know? I should follow my plans. But my plans never entailed this. I should focus on improving that. Yeah. I should when this situation is finished. How do I resolve this? What can I do to help them? Punch? No! Kick? No! Eren? What!? Titans? Not relevant. Jokes? Bad idea. Uhhhh. Ummm. Ughhh. Jokes! Fight! Anger! Sad! Punch! Kick! Gouge! Safe!? No, Save! Mama? Papa?

TearBreakHelpGoalsSavePlansFunHumanFuture *Kill-*

"When do you need to go?" Father said, wrenching me from my thoughts.

I shook my head, my heart racing. "Friday evening. We'll arrive by Monday morning."

Father sighed. "Just three days huh?" He shook his head, bringing a rigid smile to his lips. "C'mere we need to make the most of the time we have left."

"... I-I can't..." Why am I struggling to speak? "... I still need to go with Mikasa to-"

"To help her." Mother said.

"Even now putting them ahead of yourself." Father murmured.

Mother wiped her face. It still looks like a mess. "Go ahead, honey. We'll be waiting for you." I nodded.

...

...

... When did I get outside?... Doesn't matter I guess? Need to make my way to Mikasa.

That went better than expected... But why does my heart hurt? They allowed me to go without a fight... ahhh... I think that they've given up on me... Given up on me coming back alive... Huh, not what I was expecting to realize today.

... I'll be fine. I got my plans. Everyone is going to come home and we'll all be happy... we'll all be a complete and happy family. I'm not going to die, I promise.

"Where's Eren?" Mikasa asked from her bench.

I gave her a weary grin. "By himself at the bank of the canal."

"Is he ok?"

I grimaced. "Ok isn't what I'd say-" She was already moving. Rushing in front of her I held her back by her shoulders. "Woah there calm down lil knight in shining armor. He's just a bit emotionally drained is all... He talked with his mom."

"Was it bad?"

"Tough, would be the better word. If anything Aunt Carla is worse." Now she looked even more concerned. "You really shouldn't see either of them at the moment they need time to themselves." I said. Mikasa seemed to not agree with what I said, but did reluctantly nod her head.

"Speaking of time, have you had enough to prepare yourself?" She nodded once more.

"Do you want a bit more? I'm cool with waiting." I offered.

Mikasa shook her head. "No, I'm sure. Even then I think that things will go more smoothly on my end."

"Are you positive, or is that just blind optimism?"

She opened her mouth to speak. Closed it. Then opened it again. "Positive."

"Alright then." With that, we began to make our way to her home. There was a bustle of people around us. It was to be expected since we were in the middle of the town square and as of right now this was the place where everything was sold. It could be food, accessories, furniture, and supplies but everything was sold in the middle of the town. As such, this led all the residents, whether they live on the outskirts or close by, to pile together to buy the items that they needed.

As such this is also the place where most people open up a business. With such a large flux of people, it only made sense to open up shop. Although in my opinion, it would've been better to open up a shop not in the square, since most restaurants are filled.

But then again sometimes there's the rarity. "Look, there's a sale going on in that bakery, they even got low prices on the strawberry cake." I pointed at the near-empty bakery that we were passing by. It was covered in posters, and fliers to the point that I almost didn't notice that it was an establishment.

"We can come back here at a different date with the others if you want. You already know how crazy the two of them get over cookies and cheesecake." I offered. Mikasa squinted her eyes, no doubt a bit hesitant to take food from such a... ragged store.

"I'd like that." She finally said.

I grinned. "All of us would, that's why I said it." She shot me an annoyed look. And I chuckled in response. As we were about to walk past something inside the bakery caught Mikasa's eye, as she stopped walking just to stare.

I turned to look as well and inside there were little cutout signs that were colored in bright red 'Samples'.

Curse your sweet tooth, eh Mikasa? "Do you want to take a sample?"

She shook her head. "What?! No!... I can wait."

"Don't act shy now. You just looked like a sad puppy just as we were passing the store. Have you no shame?"

"Just don't spend any money, ok?" She grumbled.

I grinned, ruffling her hair. "Wait here for a bit." Walking towards the bakery's door I eyed the various flyers that were taped to the glass

door. Most were coupon flyers, with a few old news articles about the bakery's opening. But what was mainly shown were papers about the military.

"Hey miss, can I get a free sample of that strawberry cake?"

"Get lost."

"C'mon now miss what's the harm in providing a treat for the young and hungry?"

"Get. Lost."

Bitch. "Fine, how much do you want for a sample?"

"1.50 funds." What the?! The whole cake was 3 funds! Why is a sample half of that?!

I caught her smirk. If I wasn't in the presence of Mikasa I would've dropkicked this woman without any hesitation. "This is a robbery and you know it."

The hag raised a wrinkled eyebrow. "And?" Grumbling, I sneakily took some loose change out of my pocket, careful for the money not to be caught in Mikasa's gaze. The baker looked at me as if I was a nuisance.

But eventually, I brought the money to the counter. Before the lady could snatch it out of my hand, I asked. "Can you handle the money discreetly?" Confused, she gave me a hard stare as if asking 'Why?'. I subtly inched my head towards the window, where Mikasa was fogging up the windows. She was drawing an E+M, looked at it with a blushed smile before frantically wiping it away. The baker's face softened ever so slightly. She took the money from my hand, and while it wasn't discreet it sure as hell was fast. Counting the coins, she nodded to herself and bent down, cutting off a piece of cake from the display case, she put Mikasa's slice on a thin paper plate accompanied by a small plastic fork.

"Here." Huh, she gave me back a fund. Perhaps I have misjudged this old woman.

Walking out of the store, I gave Mikasa the treat. "Here you go." I grinned.

"You didn't have to." She said, reluctantly taking the cake from my hands.

I shrugged. "But I wanted to so any argument you try to make is invalid." I took her hand and forced her to continue our walk to her house. Still a bit hesitant to take the treat -not knowing how rude it was- Mikasa just let the cake sit on the plate as we walked. But, eventually her weakness for sweets won over her stubbornness, and our walk was now accompanied by the small hums of Mikasa enjoying her cake.

A few minutes later, we were standing before a modest one story building. It looked like all the other houses that were on this block, made from wood and stone, with cobblestone acting as the dirt for the area. Its only notable feature was the cropped garden that surrounded the walls of the home.

Mikasa's home was one of the projects my Father made to house refugees, but since the Ackerman's were close friends of ours he was willing to make a home that was just as extravagant as mine and Eren's. Surprisingly the family declined, saying how the house reminded them of their old cottage home, only just bigger.

I made sure Mikasa finished her cake, before knocking on the door, with three quick taps. A few seconds later the door creaked open, and Aunt Aika peeked her head out. "Oh? J we weren't expecting you tonight." She said, pushing the door to the side she pulled me into a hug, which I returned. Although, I took care not to hug too tightly since I didn't want to harm her very large belly.

Yep. Aunt Aika is pregnant. Eight months if I remember correctly.

A couple of months back, when Aunt Aika was first showing the signs of pregnancy everyone was so overjoyed. It was just another splice of good news that seemed to overshadow everything else. Really seemed to fill us with hope after all of the shit that took place.

I'm betting that it's a girl.

"Well, I met up with Mikasa and felt like tagging along. It's not a problem is it?" I asked.

She shook her head. "Not at all, come inside I just finished serving dinner. Me and Oliver were just waiting for Mikasa. Would you like to join us?"

"Tempting, but I'd rather just chat."

"That sounds lovely... Mikasa, is that frosting on your cheek?"

I wiped away the evidence with my thumb. "I think you're imagining things, Aunt Aika."

"And I think you're spoiling her." She said, lightly glaring at the both of us. I had the decency to look sheepish, but who could blame me? Mikasa is a precious angel.

"Honey, who's at that door?" Oliver called from the kitchen.

"Mikasa and J!" She answered.

"J? Well, did you already invite him inside?"

"Already coming in Uncle." Pardon the intrusion. Walking past the living room and into the kitchen, Uncle Oliver was sitting at the table, with a glass of cranberry juice in his hand. He grinned at me.

"Nice to see you J, the last time I saw you was last week wasn't it?" He asked, beckoning me to sit at the small round table. There were only four chairs in total, so I decided to sit on the one at his right.

I nodded, pulling the chair from the table. "Yep, the four of us played some games up in Mikasa's room."

"Ahh, that's right. You also wanted me to try out a 'Twissler'?"

"Twister dear." Aunt Aika corrected, walking into the kitchen with Mikasa in tow. Heading over to the cabinets above the stove, she grabbed several porcelain plates and placed them in front of us.

"I liked that one." Mikasa added.

"Only because you kept your balance better than Eren and Armin." I jabbed.

"They were sticking their butts into your face." She shot back.

Do not speak of that. "Shhhh! Don't tell them!"

"Oh? Tell me more sweetie." Aunt Aika teased... Yeah, I just imagined what she could do with that knowledge and I don't like it.

Thankfully, Mikasa seemed to have mercy. "Later, I need to talk to the both of you."

"Well, we have open ears." Uncle Oliver responded. Placing his glass to the side, both he and Aunt Aika gave Mikasa their undivided attention.

She took in a deep breath. "I'm going to join the cadet corps."

"No." Uncle Oliver said.

Mikasa tried again. "We're going to join the cadet corps." This time she pointed at me.

"Do you take us for fools?" Uncle Oliver asked. His eyes narrowed.

"What do you mean?" Mikasa asked.

Uncle Oliver pinched the bridge of his nose. "You're going to join the cadet corps. Sure that seems reasonable enough until you realize that right after Eren is going to join the scouts. And knowing you, you're going to follow him wherever he goes."

Mikasa frowned. "Is that a problem?"

"It sure as hell is a problem!"

"Dear calm down." Aunt Aika put her hand on his shoulder, but Uncle Oliver just shook it off. Glaring at Mikasa. "I refuse! I refuse to calm down and I refuse to let her go into the military!"

Mikasa crossed her arms, returning her Father's glare. "And why is it such a problem?"

"Are you joking?... You're not... You're not joking" Locking his hands, resting them on the table. Uncle Oliver stared at the wooden ceiling. "You can't even begin to see the problem can you?" He said in disbelief.

"What? What problem?" His daughter pressed.

He snapped his head back to face her. "You're going to join the scouts Mikasa! The branch where everyone dies!"

"I won't die! I'll have Eren, J, and Armin with me." Mikasa argued.

"There is another problem! You aren't doing this because you want to! You are just following those three on whatever sort of adventure they're willing to put themselves into. You never decide for yourself. All you do is follow their lead."

I couldn't help but apologize. "Sorry about that."

"You should be." Oliver growled, a scowl plastered on his face. He turned his attention back to his upset daughter. "You can't decide for yourself, Mikasa. Tell me, if Eren or J weren't ever to be born into this world would you have ever gone to choose the military."

"I'm sure that if it wasn't for them, we never would've lived this long." She scowled.

Oliver shook in his seat, grounding his teeth. He knew she was right. "Maybe that would've been for the best. Because at least I know that my daughter would've had some sort of free will before fucking dying!" In his anger, he knocked his glass cup to the ground. It broke into several chunks with red tainting the wooden floor.

But we all ignored it. Much more focused on the words Oliver had said.

"Oliver!" His wife cried, shocked by his brutal words.

Oliver whirled to face her. "What do you expect, Aika!? Mikasa is going to join that death sentence of a branch, all because she wants to go wherever her little friends go!"

"I can choose wherever I want to go!" Mikasa defended.

"That's what you think! You aren't choosing this life for yourself! All I see is my daughter under some kind of brainwashing trying to follow some punks to their deaths! Do you expect me to understand!? To sympathize!? To believe that you'll turn out ok! Open your eyes, Mikasa! The chances of you surviving are close to none! It's close to none and yet you expect us to be ok with sending you off?!"

"You aren't going to send me off, because I don't need your permission to join." Mikasa grounded out.

"But you do need our permission to stay in this house." Oliver declared.

"Oliver!" Aunt Aika shouted, distressed.

He paid her no heed. "If a child is twelve years old and wishes to join the ranks of the military then, at that point they are considered to be

an adult in the eyes of the law. Which means that we don't have to provide care for you before your leave."

Mikasa was silent -we all were-, until she spoke in a frail and tiny voice. "Daddy?"

Oliver faltered for a split second, his body shuddering. His throat strained, and his lips quivered. His eyes misted over and his body shuddered as if he was in pain. But, eventually he regained control until he looked just like stone.

He spoke, his voice loud and clear if a bit shaky. "If you want to join the military and die, then so be it. I won't be able to change that stubborn mind of yours. But what I can do is not allow you to stay in this house. Stay with Carla for the next couple of days. Knowing her she'll welcome you with open arms."

I don't think it'll be so welcoming. "Uncle, there's no need for things to get so harsh."

"Shut your mouth J!" Oliver snarled.

... If you were a stranger you'd be sporting a fractured jaw right about now.

Oliver's eyes softened, but his body stood firm. "I will not spend the next few days with my daughter while in a horrible situation. I'm not going to spend the next few days fighting with my daughter before her death."

"Mommy?" Aika didn't look at her daughter. Instead, she stood from her chair and went to pick up the fragments of the plate.

"... Fine!" Mikasa bawled, pushing herself from the chair, she ran out of the kitchen into the living room and slammed the door open, rushing outside and out of view.

Oliver deflated into his chair, looking exhausted. "I'm sorry J... Please... just leave the house."

I stayed rooted in my seat. It didn't look like Oliver noticed, rising to his feet he stumbled his way into the hallway and sluggishly opened the door for his and Aunt Aika's room. He vanished inside, without another sound.

Aika was still picking up the shards of juice-coated glass, putting whatever she picked into the palm of her hand, leaving it red and sticky. Standing from my chair, I grabbed the napkins that rested on the table and made my way over to the mess, helping to clean the drink.

"I'll protect her, Aika." I said as I wiped away the last of the spill. "Just like I've always had."

Aika stopped her motions briefly. "... J." She said softly.

"Yes?"

She took a deep shuddering breath and began to gather the last of the shards. "... When the wall was first breached, we couldn't handle the thought that Mikasa was dead. You saw how I looked, Oliver was at least able to save some face." She chuckled, but there was no joy in her laugh. "We thought that she was dead. Our precious little girl... dead. It felt like a knife was twisted deep into our hearts. But the moment that we found her... that knife never did leave us-" Aika picked the last shard of glass off the ground. "Because we always had the feeling that she would go to throw away her life for the three of you. We just never knew how."

She carried the fragments of broken glass to the trash can, opening the lid so that she could throw away the pieces one by one. "Oliver and I love the idea of you, Eren, and Armin protecting her and vice-versa... but it's just as you like to say; you're about as special as you are unspecial." She said gingerly. Weakly.

Aika turned to face me, and I saw the streaks of tears falling from her face. "Sending her off to the scouts... it's the same as sending her off to her death... Same as sending you off to yours." Wobbling towards me, Aunt Aika placed her hands on my shoulders. Her crying eyes stared into my own.

Weren't we in this position once before? On the boat. She was distressed... And I didn't know what to say.

"J..." She sobbed. "... Please let you all come back alive... Please, let Mikasa come back to watch her sibling grow."

"... We will. I'll make sure of it."

Aunt Aika gave me a brittle smile. "Thank you... Now go run after Mikasa." She said, gently taking the stained napkin from my hand... Huh completely forgot that I was holding that. Now my hand was colored red too.

Ignoring the sticky feeling on my palm, I gave Aunt Aika a nod and rushed out of the house.

Most people would panic when looking for a runaway. But, finding those three friends of mine was one of the easiest things in the world. So not even a minute later I had caught up to Mikasa, who was still running through the streets.

"Mikasa!" I called.

She stopped in her tracks, her shoulders shaking. "I'm fine! I don't need them! I have the three of you! And Carla, and Dr. Grisha! And your Mommy and Daddy! I don't need them!" She shouted, drawing the attention of those passing by us.

"Then why are you crying?" I asked. Mikasa turned her head, revealing red eyes and a puffy nose accompanied by quivering lips, and tear-stained cheeks.

I outstretched my arms. "C'mere." She dashed into my arms burying her face into my chest, letting out soft wails that were muffled by my shirt.

... This shirt has been ran through today. Must be cursed.

I patted the back of Mikasa's head. "You are so stubborn and prideful that it ends up getting you hurt y'know? You really need to drop that trait, it doesn't help anyone, and sure as hell doesn't help you... I think you got it from your dad." Mikasa sniffled in response.

"... Do you want to get that strawberry cake right now?" She nodded, face still buried deep. "Then let's go."

I grasped Mikasa's shoulders and began to lead her to the bakery we were at earlier. It was a quiet walk, the only sound that I paid attention to was Mikasa's feet dragging behind. Her face still hadn't left the comfort of my clothes.

... I don't ever remember her being this emotional in the show. Closest thing I could remember were those moments that involved Eren. Him getting kidnapped, him questioning her feelings, and him hurting those feelings. For her to be this... vulnerable, I know that it's because of my actions. But, I can't decide on whether it's a good thing or a bad thing. I love that Mikasa is more willing to show her emotions. It's a healthy part of being human. But at the same time, will this hinder her abilities in the future? Make her less capable than less before?

Well, then again it really wouldn't matter. Mikasa having a changed personality isn't something I need to worry too much about. And even if it does hinder her, I'll protect her.

Mikasa peeked her strained eyes. "... I never asked but did you ever talk with your parents? About joining?" I almost missed a step, the question surprising me.

Luckily, I caught myself. "I was planning on doing it tomorrow." I lied. Why would I want to admit my emotional baggage? She doesn't need to feel any worse than she does right now.

Mikasa buried her face into my side. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry for making it such a difficult day."

"It's no problem, Mikasa. No problem at all. I mean how could it? We got-" I let go of her and waved my hands at the bakery before us.

"Caaake!"

"Cake." Mikasa sniffled, walking inside of the store with her head down and shoulders slumped. I saw her talk to the old lady, and then walk to a table where she then slumped down into a chair and began hiding her face into the crooks of her elbows.

It hurt just to watch.

"Stay strong Mikasa." I muttered, going into the store. "In the end, everything is going to be ok. Just wait for it. I'll prove it."

"Armin!" I called, running down the bank of the canal, careful not to drop the box of cake I had in my hands. Armin sat on the cobblestone stairs that separated the bank from the street, a book in his hands and the straw of an apple juice carton resting on his lips.

Turning his head from his book, he waved me over. Jogging up to him I patted him on the head with a grin.

"Cheesecake?" I offered. Taking the book from his hands and shoving the box into his arms, before flopping down next to him on the steps, taking a subtle look at the title of the page he was reading.

'Who Or What Made The Walls?'

"Did you bring this for me?" Armin asked, peeking inside to see its contents. Smiling when he saw it was chocolate flavored.

I closed the book, but not before making a crease at the top of the page. "Well I brought it for everyone, Mikasa and I went to a bakery and I decided to buy some sliced cake for everyone, felt like they could all use some sweets." Yeah, I left cake at our parents' doorsteps too and made sure to get their favorites. Hopefully, it'll cheer them up a little. Or be comforted just a tiny bit.

Sadly, I'm broke now.

"Well, thank you." He said, taking the slice of cake out of the box, already placed on a small paper plate with a fork piercing the crust.

I grinned. "No problem." Spreading my arms, I leaned against the stone stairs letting Armin enjoy his treat for a few minutes, both of us enjoying the silence that the canal seemed to give.

Y'know it's weird. When I first became friends with Armin I thought that he would be a chatterbox, always talking about ideas and ideals and the sort. I was obviously influenced by what I remembered from the show. But instead, almost all of our hang-out sessions involve us just enjoying the moment in silence.

When I'm with Eren we normally just go on adventures, trying to strike up mischief. Looking for something that will get our hearts pumping. With Mikasa, we just go through strolls around the town looking for any good places to eat and talking about whatever seems to occupy our mind.

But with Armin, it's just us and the quiet... Honestly, I think I enjoy these little sessions of ours most.

It sucks that I need to break tradition. "Are you going to join the military?" My question seemed to startle him. Whether it be because of the question itself or because I decided to speak was anyone's guess.

Armin chewed on his fork, nodding his head.

"Did you already tell your parents that you're joining?" Armin stabbed his cake.

"Like they would've cared." He mumbled, placing the plate to the side so he could rest his hands on his lap.

I sighed. "You're right, they wouldn't have. What about your Grandpa?"

Armin was silent for a moment. "Grandpa isn't happy." He said. "It's just that he's worried about me."

"I mean he does have a right to be worried." I said.

Armin nodded. "Of course he does, he's my grandpa. Honestly, he tried to stop me from trying to join, made me work a bit harder the past couple of weeks in the fields. Saying things how it's about to be the season for harvest, so we need to work extra hard... But that's usually when it's easiest."

"Is that why you haven't been able to hang out with us lately?" I asked. The last time that we were all together was around two weeks ago. And it's been a month since it was just Armin and I.

"Yeah. I don't know what he was trying to do. Maybe he was trying to make it so that I would forget about the registration date? Make it so that I was too tired to remember?" If that was his plan then it wouldn't have worked there's propaganda everywhere promoting the military and its upcoming recruitment.

"Maybe. Maybe not. I could never really tell what's going on with your grandpa's head."

"Neither could I. It actually makes me a little frustrated." He admitted.

Oh? "Frustrated?"

Armin stared at the stone beneath his feet. "Well, I don't mean it in a bad way. If anything it's like a sort of challenge."

"How so?"

"Well, I like to think that I can read people pretty well. Something that I like to take pride in from time to time."

"Oh like me?" I teased.

Armin smiled. "Yeah, just like you. But whenever I try to get a read on my grandpa, what he's trying to think... well... nothing."

"Hmmm, I wouldn't say that." Armin stared at me, beckoning me to continue. "A blind man could see that all he ever thinks about is how much he absolutely adores you."

A dusting of pink spread across his cheeks. "Guess you're right about that." He chuckled.

"It's not something I'm right about if everyone can agree with it. More like a mutual agreement." Armin laughed, and I soon followed after. After a few seconds, we began to quiet down, until all that remained was our familiar silence.

"... How did it go for everyone else?"

Furrowing my brows, a harsh sigh escaped my lips as I scratched my hair. "Not the greatest of things I'll admit. Aunt Carla allowed for Eren to go but... she's broken-hearted at the moment. Mikasa's parents... they don't wish to talk to Mikasa for a while."

"And you?"

"I think that mine accepted the fact that I'm going to die."

"What!"

I kept my hands on Armin's shoulders to calm him. "Hey don't get so emotional. You just misunderstood me. It's just that if the situation ever arises, that I need to save one of you, they accept the fact that I'll do a sacrifice play or something along those lines. Either way, I'll

never let that happen." It looked like Armin wanted to say something, but right before he was about to speak, it looked like he sucked in any words that he wanted to let out.

"Well, we'll make sure that the situation never arises then!" He declared.

I grinned. "You got that right." Silence took over us for a few minutes. And the both of us welcomed it, staring off into the darkening sky watching as orange encompassed blue, turning it into a shallow purple only illuminated by the fading sun and thinning clouds. The wind brushed at our faces, tickling our noses and rustling our clothes. Bright green leaves fluttered by, as if they were signals for the insects and critters on the night to begin their nightly routine of singing their melodies. Closing my eyes I took a deep breath, enjoying this moment of peace.

"... His health is getting worse..." Armin said, drawing me out from my trance.

"Who's?"

"Grandpa's."

"Really? He still looks as lively as ever."

"That's how it seems on the surface. But whenever he's at home all he does is rest in his bed. The other day he even came down with some harsh coughs... I didn't question him about it, but there was a bit of blood on his sleeve." He said, downtrodden.

"Oh... Do your parents realize it yet?"

He spit at the ground next to his feet. "As if. All that's ever been on their minds is how to fly. Grandpa and I aren't important enough to be included in their stupid schemes. Not important enough to care about."

Grounding his head into his arms, Armin snarled. "I sometimes think about why they ever decided to have me. It makes me imagine if I was just an accident, but then I wonder why my Mother never drank a bottle of wine every night during her pregnancy... At least that way I could've died at birth and not have been their hassle to deal with."

I raised my voice. "Oi Armin-"

"I hate them."

I stopped whatever sentence that was going to come out. Instead, I stared at Armin, the little boy who had raised his head and was staring at me with a trembling lip. "I hate them both so much that it makes me want to tear at my skin whenever I see them. Always meddling about in their room making plans of how to take up into the air like birds. But never making plans on how to spend time with the rest of their 'forgotten' family." Tears started to spill from his eyes midway through his rant. I couldn't bring myself to speak. I was a bit shocked, to be honest. But, I still had half a mind to dab at his tears with one of the napkins I brought along.

Armin gave a grateful smile... before it turned into a frown. "You already know that before I met you that I was getting beat on by other kids. Well, whenever I came home with bruises littering my body and blood running down my nose the two of them never cared to ask if I was alright. They never even made an effort to look at me. The only person who took care of me was grandpa... and... and I don't think that he's going to be able to take care of me... for much longer." He sniffled.

I moved to pat him on the back but before I could he held up his hand stopping me from continuing. He rubbed away the remnants of his tears. "I'm going to join the scouts, but my reasoning is selfish. While all of you want to go so that you could protect what you all care about, I'm going so that I can get away from my parents. And in a way to get away from my Grandpa... What kind of a person am I?"

"... Not a bad one." Armin turned to stare at me. "Sure it may be selfish and a bit cowardly, but you're not the only one who's doing it to not protect people. There are going to be a lot of people who are joining the military just to get a chance to get into Sina for free, there are also the ones that are doing it for the decrease in taxes. And then some people just want to die. Joining the military to get away from your parents is nothing to be ashamed of. Because at the end of the day you're doing what you think is best and so that you can stay happy, and that's something worth respecting at least."

In one fluid motion, I was beginning to pat Armin's head. "Also you're only twelve, so being scared of your Grandpa dying isn't wrong. Of course, it isn't the best way to go about things, but then again what is? Everything regarding death is different and you have the right to go about it differently than others. But just make these next couple of days just about you and your grandpa. Ok?"

"... Thank you J."

"Heh, what are friends for Armin. Now get back to your cake." With a nod, Armin picked up his plate from the dirt and began to eat what was left of it.

... Should I brutalize his parents? It's a very tempting thought. The idea of me popping their shoulders and bending their knee's in the wrong direction seems almost appealing to me... Fuck them. Fuck you, Andreas. Fuck you, Gisela. If I ever see the two of you... no... *when* I see the two of you, us three will have some nice words together. The moment that I fucking met you both I was suspicious, I didn't like the feeling you two gave off. When Armin introduced us to the two of you a couple of years back you guys didn't even bat an eyelash just a fucking simple 'hello' and then back to work.

I just thought that the two of you were fucking rude, and I didn't even think much about it. All I knew was that I didn't want to be around you two. I should've been better. You pieces of trash aren't fucking parents just people who had a fucking kid. I wonder what you two

are doing right now, still working on your projects I guess. Are they even the slightest bit worried about Armin right now? Probably not.

Y'know it's funny. I wanted to stop the campaign to retake the walls because I didn't want people to die. Andreas and Gisela were even a part of the 'effort'. So in a way, I saved them. But now I wish that I left them to rot.

Of course, I don't mean that, the anger is just talking. I don't want to kill them... yet.

I sighed. "Man, things aren't going to get any easier. Are they?." Armin nodded with cake-covered cheeks.

"... You really got to learn how to eat buddy."

Y'know this chapter was really hard to write. I don't know what happened but I felt my motivation to write this chapter instantly crumble. Probably because I wasn't able to write a fighting scene. It also might've been something to do with me having to reread the manga while rewatching a part of the anime so I could copy down the opening ceremony of the cadets. And like I said in the previous chapter, my energy just depletes whenever I have to do that. And I think I know why. When I was copying down the dialouge for episode three, it took me an hour to copy down five fucking minutes. An hour for five minutes... It sucked. I was actually going to include it in this chapter. But I just didn't have the will to finish it in this chapter. Sorry.

I completely forgot about Hannes, so I just decided to include him during this chapter, just to show that he and J do have a past relationship. Hell, I'm not going to lie, that scene was just like a last minute thing.

Also what the fuck?! The last time I updated this was more than 5 months ago!? Sure as hell doesn't feel like it. I feel terrible though. Last update took a month, this time it took more than

five times that, I feel like punching myself because it's unfair to you guys. Well here is my semblance of an excuse though, as you guys know I got a job, took up most of my time for the summer. Then comes August and there comes school, even less time for me. Especially when I realized that school takes up my job hours, thankfully my school has a program that allows me to work during school hours, but for some fucking reason they weren't making it easy for me. Why? Because they kept fucking up my schedule!

This is a quick rundown of my routine. Wake up at 5 AM, be at work by 6 and get out at 9 or 9:30 depending on the day. Then I need to head over to school which is 30 minutes away but I make a quick stop at my house so I could change and grab my stuff. Go to school for the next four hours, come back home, eat and be at the gym by 3-3:30. After an hour or 1 ½ hour I come back and take a shower and finish some chores. By now it's around 6 PM, then this is the part where I need to do my almost daily errand runs which normally take an hour or two. Hell, it's gotten to the point that I'm desperate for time to do my school work. I don't remember the last time I was able to write, read, or game for hours on end.

Thankfully I'll only have to continue following this schedule for December. Starting January I'm not going to work anymore since it's actually hindering my school progress. I'd rather have passing grades, than a few bucks in my bank account.

And as a result I'll have more time to write. Yay!

What makes me happy though is that you guys were so worried about the story, it really helps me think that I'm doing a good job. I get happy when I read your guys' reviews. Honestly, it makes me think I should do a Q&A. You guys ask me some things about myself or the story and I answer. Maybe I'm just getting too ahead of myself.

I honestly didn't know what to expect from this chapter. I practically changed the whole timeline which was what I wanted to happen, but I forgot that I would've needed to change what would've happened after. Do you know how boring writing history is? Not the funnest things to do since you need to make sure that it actually needs to make sense. And don't even get me started on the drama of the chapter, I had a tough time with that.

I'm also a bit upset too. Since it's already been so long since I last updated, I rushed to finish the chapter. I feel like I could've made it better somehow. Explained some things better. But, I like to cheer myself up by remembering the chapter has 19.5k words.

But I extremely enjoyed flushing out the characters. I especially loved writing Armin's scene too, since his family was never really explained in Aot... or anyone's for that matter. Hell the only family dynamics we get to see are Sasha, Eren, Mikasa, Historia, Reiner, and a bit of Jean, and even then there is barely anything to work with.

I also had no idea that Armin had parents, it was only because I was scrolling through his wikifanpage did I realise that his parents were the ones that attempted to ride on that hot air balloon in that one episode. I shit you not I said "Oh fuck me" when I realised I didn't include them to the story. So I got to brainstorming, and found it fitting for his parents to be neglectful, since we only see Armin with his grandpa and with his parents trying to escape.

Mikasa and Eren were also simple for me to come up with. Carla worries over Eren's safety like always, but she has a selfish intent since she doesn't want him gone from her life. But that's understandable. I thought that adding her mother dying would give her worries a little more oomph. Eren wants to go because the only people he trusts to protect his family are the scouts. MP fucking up during the People's Breach caused for Eren not

to like them even more now... along with some others. Take notice that since the MP messed up there will be some changes to the story. Note I'm not bashing the branch just showing unappealing aspects so that I can show some... development later on. And these developments will affect the story as a whole.

Mikasa's parents on the other hand were much more... toxic though. I portrayed them as loving and caring but here I show them with another side that I had only briefly shown in chapter 4: Oliver taking threats seriously, and Aika staying 'calm' under pressure. But I didn't want to make them cruel, so boom! I make it so in the end in a way, it's for both their and Mikasa's emotional benefit. How are you going to have a big fight and expect to be in the same house? Only leads to bigger fights. But, their actions will have some consequences... Especially for their unborn baby...

Am I evil?... Or a literary genius?... I'll stop now.

But please note that this Mikasa acts a little different from the one in canon. Why? Well while she is still protective of Eren, she is not as serious due to J being the strongest out of the four. In canon we always see Mikasa be someone that Eren and Armin depend on to get out of a messy situation, but here that person is J. Also because she has her parent's alive and well she also has her own life that doesn't completely revolve around Eren, no matter what her parents might say. Due to these factors Mikasa isn't as nearly as serious as she was in canon.

Development people, gotta love it.

If anything the only real trouble I had was writing 'my' parents' scenes. It was hard for me to put behind a good motivation for them since they witnessed 'me' fight a horde of titans, so they know that J is capable. But then I remembered that they're parents, they notice the mannerisms in their children, so

wouldn't it be worrying if all that they've been seeing is J helping his friends with complete disregard for his safety. Makes people think some unpleasant thoughts. After all, hasn't he already sacrificed his back to save them? I'll write how scarred it is in the next chapter, so you guys have an idea just how unpleasant it looks.

Although they don't notice all his mannerisms. J seemed to have an unnoticed episode in this chapter. Being reborn took more things than just his old life... While I won't reveal more until future chapters, I will say this: The irony is going to be *fucking delicious*.

I've been having a lot of fun writing this. I thoroughly enjoy giving the story my own take on things if just one single person existed. Makes me really think how much life can change if you involve just a single person. Weird.

Onto another topic: REGI! Yeah I'm not sure if you guys noticed but J decided to start the Yeagerists much earlier than when Eren did. I'm not going to tell you why because, y'know spoilers. But I will tell you that there's going to be a surplus of OC's that I hope you all are going to enjoy, since I'm going to flush them all out. I'll especially love showcasing Regi, and his soon to be revealed unit in the next couple of chapters. But as of right now the only people you'll know of is Regi: The Second-In-Command. And Natasha: The Treasurer -if you didn't figure it out-.

Another reason as to why the story took so long is because in the beginning I tried to include so much into the chapter. How do I know this? Well I was writing some dialogue and I got curious as to how many words I'd written. I check and it's about 14.4k. I think that's not too bad... until I realized that it was 10k of it was just pure dialogue. I basically made two chapters. So after some quick editing I rearranged the chapter to include the scenes that I thought made sense.

If I followed through with how much I wanted to include, this chapter would've probably been around 40k words, and would've taken a whole year to finish.

Next chapter is basically $\frac{1}{4}$ of the way done. It's planned out but I just got to add more dialogue and then start on adding the details and context.

... Now that I think about it, maybe the way I write hinders my progress. What I usually do is write the dialogue because it gives me a clear image of what I want to happen during a scene. So I write all of the dialogue for the chapter and when finished I go back to write the context and details. But I find that part to be boring. Extremely boring. Maybe that's why it took longer for me to write, I didn't have the will to include the details. I should probably stop doing that and force myself to include it while writing. During the hiatus I came across some advice from Stephen King and he says that as long as a person writes at least 6 pages a day then their work will be finished faster. Or something like that. I'm not too sure but I'll try to dedicate six pages a day from now on... Somehow. Probably when January starts.

Hopefully the next chapter won't take as long. Remember to review and criticize!

Story Times

"We shall now begin the enlistment ceremony for the 104th training corps! Unfortunately for you, I, Keith Shadis have been assigned to be your instructor. I have not the slightest intention to welcome you! As you are now, you're all mere cattle who exist to fatten up! You're nothing more than that! We'll take you useless degenerates and make something out of you in the next three years! We'll drill the methods of fighting the titans into you! In three years when you find yourself before a titan, will you still be mere prey?! Or will you be the honorable wall that protects its king?! Or perhaps a glorious soldier of mankind that exterminates the titans?! Decide for yourselves!"

... I've always wondered why you decided to shave your head. Were you balding? Did you think you looked better without hair? Was it to pronounce your wrinkles? Or to pronounce your raccoon eyes? Either way, it worked, you look badass.

I mean, damn. You look intimidating.

I wonder how all these youngins are handling you?... Well, most are scared shitless. Fair considering that almost all of them are pre-teens. I don't even think most of them have finished puberty. Or even started it for the matter.

Damn. Just realized how desperate Paradis is. Are they really losing that badly to titans that they need to send teens to go fight them?

... Yeah guess so.

But still, these are all kids. I only have faint memories of what they all looked like in the anime. Or like faint blurs. But I remember that they all looked like mature adolescents.

They aren't.

Most of them have chubby cheeks and pudgy stomachs. They still haven't even developed into young men and women. The boys barely have a single chin hair and the girls still haven't even begun to develop.

Hell! They're all so small! I'm positive that a majority can't even reach my fucking chest!

Then again I'm abnormally tall for a twelve-year-old. What am I again? I think the doctor said 177cm? 176? 178? Somewhere around there? How much would that be in inches?... Damn, I'm 5'10. That's fucking insane.

Scouring each cadet, I see the familiar faces of Eren, Mikasa, and Armin. All lined up in different positions in the formation, standing tall and proud with their hands clasped behind their backs. Well, Armin is a bit shaky. But at least it looks like his eyes are focused. Perhaps the nerves are getting the better of him. And the other two seem to be a bit stiff. They were nervous too.

There's Jean. Hmmm, I don't see any resemblance to a horse. Sure his face might be a bit long, but that's about it. Nothing else more than a boy masking his nervousness with confidence.

Eyes darting, I spot Ymir. Historia is not too far away from her. They don't look like I would've thought. Ymir looks like your average moody teen. And while pretty, Historia isn't beautiful.

Connie was hidden by others. He was small. Smaller than I would've thought. He looked like he wanted this orientation to end immediately.

Sasha was just behind him. She appeared calm, but I could her hand fiddling with that infamous potato. It was also covered in palm sweat.

... Oh, hey! What's crack-a-lacking you three? Haven't seen you guys in years. Y'know. Since I escorted you guys from that broken

house all the way to safety. I'm sure you guys remember me. After all, I made quite the impression right?

Reiner. Bertholdt. Annie.

I gave them each a slight smile. Enjoying their gobsmacked faces.

There were many others I recognized. Marco. Mina. Thomas. Just to name a few. I could see each of their mannerisms. Masked bravado. Stiff spines. Twitchy hands. Cold sweats.

Then again there were the ones who had seen some shit. Looking like they were ready to pounce at a moment's notice. Focused eyes glared at the space in front of them.

... They're all far too young. Each cadet that was piled in this desert of a camp was too young to be throwing their lives away. They shouldn't have to waste their lives battling foes that would rejoice in their deaths. They should be at home playing with friends, enjoying their families. Being dumb. Fighting for Bacon.

Not this.

My heart clenched at the thought that these kids were going to die. Have unfulfilled lives. Their dreams and aspirations were snuffed out. Families torn by the loss of their sons and daughters, brothers and sisters.

Canon was such a cruel place... I'm going to make sure that these kids can live happily.

"You there!" Shadis called.

Armin flinched. "Sir!"

"Who the hell are you?!"

"Armin Arlert from Shiganshina District, sir!"

"That so?" Shadis glowered. "What a ridiculous name! Did your father name you that?!"

Armin's eyes narrowed the slightest bit. "My grandfather did, sir!"

"Alert," Shadis leaned down. "What did you come here to do?"

To get away. "To contribute to mankind's victory, sir!"

"How commendable of you. We'll use you as titan bait." Shadis grasped Armin's blond head. "Third line, face backwards!" Oh god, the look on his face! He looks so confused! Don't laugh! Don't you dare fucking laugh J!

Shadis stalked to his next victim. A blonde haired boy with atrocious sideburns. "Who the hell are you!"

"Sir! Thomas Wagner from Trost District, sir!"

"I can't hear you!" Thomas winced.

"Thomas Wagner from Trost-"

"Still no good!" Shadis spat. "Go work on it in the stables!"

He stood before a small girl, glaring down at her. "Next!"

"Sir! Mina Carolina from Karanese District, sir!" She shouted, sweat dripping off her chin.

"Wrong!" He yelled. "You're from a pigsty! Worse than cattle!"

Mina closed her eyes. "Sir! I'm worse than cattle, sir!"

Shadis scowled. "No! You're a fly swarming around a pig's ass!"

"Yes, sir!" She cowered.

"Next!" He roared, marching to a boy.

"Sir! Samuel Linke-Jackson from Snate Village, sir!"

"A horrible name! Change it now!" Shadis growled. "What are you doing here?!"

"To devote my flesh and blood to humanity, sir!" Samuel exclaimed, intent on staring at the ground ahead of him.

Frowning, Shadis walked away from the petrified boy. "Fourth line, face backwards!"

Trekking the formation Shadis watched every cadet that he passed. "Listen up! I've seen a lot of shit in my time, but you are the sorriest pieces of shit I've ever seen. You're in for three years of hell."

... Wow. Rude.

He stopped before another young boy. "Now who the hell are you?!"

"Jean Kirstein from Trost District, sir!" Jean shouted.

Glaring, Shadis asked. "What did you come here to do?"

Don't you say it. Don't you fucking say it... He's going to say it.

Jean gave a nervous smile. "To enlist in the Military Police Brigade and live within the inner walls, sir."

He said it... And Eren's big mad. Calm down bro.

"I see. So you want to live within the inner walls, huh?" Shadis asked, a brow raised.

"Yes." Jean smiled.

Shadis slammed his head into Jean's, causing the boy to fall to his knees cradling the part he was struck with a groan. "Who said you could sit?! Someone who can't succeed here won't make it into the Military Police Brigade!"

Eren stop staring.

Spinning on his heel, Shadis went to his next victim. "Who the hell are you?! What did you come here to do?"

"Marco Bott from Jinae Village in Wall Rose's southern district, sir!" Why didn't you just say your name and that you came from Trost? Now you sound overly eager ma boi. "I've come to enlist in the Military Police Brigade and devote myself to serving the king, sir!"

"Really?" Shadis asked. Marco nodded, a cherry smile plastered.

"That's all fine and well. Endeavor for it. However..." Shadis glowered at Marco. "... the king has no desire for your body."

... Wait a fucking moment... the way that he implied... does he think that Marco's gay?... Is he gay?

"You're next!" Shadis shouted. "Who the hell are you?!"

"Connie Springer from Ragako Village in Wall Rose's southern district, sir!" Overly nervous ma boi... You did the pledge wrong dude... Now you're being carried by the head... Maybe you'll get taller a bit early?... Oh, there's Sasha... eating her potato... Don't fucking laugh. Don't fucking laugh. Don't fucking laugh.

"You have it backwards, Connie Springer. It should've been the first thing you learned. That salute is a symbol that openly declares your determination to offer your life. Is your heart on the right side?" Shadis asked but his attention was drawn to Sasha. Everyone's attention was drawn to Sasha... Don't you fucking do it J!

Shadis stalked to the Potato Girl. "Hey, you. What are you doing?" Sasha looked around, confused.

I was biting the inside of my cheek, drawing blood. I didn't want to spit, so I swallowed it back into my system.

"You!" He roared. "I'm talking to you! Who the hell are you?!"

She swallowed the bit of food that was in her mouth. "Sasha Blouse from Dauper Village in Walls Rose's southern district, sir!"

"Sasha Blouse," He repeated, tasting the name. "What the hell is in your right hand?"

"A steamed potato, sir. I happened to see it in the kitchen, so I took it, sir!"

"In other words, you stole it." He said. "Why... Why did you take that potato out now?"

"It's best to eat it before it gets cold, so I decided now was the time to do so, sir."

Well, you can't fault that logic.

"No, I still don't understand... Why did you eat the potato?"

"Are you asking me why people eat potatoes, sir?" She asked, confused.

I'M FUCKING DYING! STOP! STOP IT SASHAAAAA! YOU'RE FUCKING KILLING ME!

Then, it appeared like she realized something. Breaking the potato in half, she grimaced before handing it to Shadis. "This half's for you, sir."

"Half?" He questioned. Absolutely bamboozled.

Sasha smiled.

Shadis exploded. "You're going to run this field until you drop! Until you drop!" She frowned. "And no fucking dinner for you!" She looked horrified.

A laugh escaped my lips. It was a small, measly laugh but in this silence it might've as well been a roar in a meadow.

And that attracted everyone's attention. More importantly, Shadis's attention.

Hoh? You're walking up to me? Do I not have that intimidating presence? Because if so then that's bullshit. I'm the scariest motherfucker here... That's a lie. Annie has the best poker face as of the moment. But I'll surpass her eventually.

"Who are you?" He glared.

"Sir. J Monke from Shiganshina District, sir."

... Oi. Why is everyone staring at me? Armin said he was Shiganshina too, so why am I getting side-eyed?... Oh, it's because I'm not yelling right? Well sorry, but knowing that this man was thirsting over Aunt Carla for years... well it kind of takes away his intimidation factor. And frankly, I'm not scared as to what he'll do to me. Mother kind of took away that fear and just made it so that I'll only be scared of her. How? I don't even fucking know. For some reason her hitting me with the slippers hurts. Sure, punch me in the face and I'm fine but give my mother a slipper...

Or it might be since everyone knows exactly what my last name signifies. I mean, it's not like 'Monke' is a common name. Doesn't help that the only person that comes to mind would be the 'genius entrepreneur', Charles Monke.

Shadis eyes darkened. "And what about you? Why did you join?" Weird he's not yelling either.

"To save as many people as I can, sir."

"... Save people eh?" He narrowed his eyes. "And just what are you willing to do to save those people?"

"I'll become whatever I need to be, sir."

"How about you care to elaborate."

"I'll be whatever the situation calls for. A soldier, a hero, or a devil. Whatever is needed to save the lives of others, I'll become so, sir.

"Then you'll become a fool." He declared.

I grinned. "I already am one, sir."

His eye twitched. "Good... And do you know what fools do?"

"Make jokes, sir?"

"They offer their blood and dignities to please the king. So go ahead, offer me one or the other."

... Check. And. Mate.

"I can't do either of that, but I can offer you the chance to have sex with Carla Yeager."

Mute. That was what described the area. The cadets seemed to have stopped breathing. My trio of childhood friends looked like a mix between horrified and petrified. At least Mikasa and Armin did. Eren looked like he was about to go on a frenzy.

"WHAT!?" Shadis bellowed, shocked that I would ever say such a thing.

"Carla Yeager." I pointed my finger at a mortified Eren. "Y'know. His mom."

Shadis sputtered, his face becoming red. Was he embarrassed? Or angry? Kind of hard to tell.

"What? You don't want to mess around in her bed? Like monkeys with no self-control?" Shadis was starting to turn purple. His hands clenching and unclenching. His eyes were a twitching mess.

I couldn't help myself. "Oo oo ah ah?"

I barely felt the punch.

"I hate you. I hate you. I hate you!" Eren spat, frothing at the mouth.

I rolled my eyes, my back leaning over the cabin porch. "I know it's all love."

"I want to kill you."

"With love."

"No. With a rope around your neck."

"A rope made of love."

"A rope made from straw. The hard and tough straw that'll leave you struggling for air. A total of four-thousand two-hundred and fourteen strands, that will each tighten around the flesh of your throat, leaving it bruised and clogged with blood until it breaks your spinal cord in half!"

... That was a bit too detailed for my liking.

"I believe you are a bit upset." I decided.

Eren lunged.

I placed my palm on his face, my longer reach effectively stopping Eren from getting too close. He didn't seem to notice, wildly flailing his hands in an effort to tear my jugular.

"Really?!" He roared, slightly muffled. "No fucking shit! You just asked the fucking instructor if he wanted to fuck my mom! My mom!"

"I thought it would be a funny joke!" Eren bit my palm, teeth gnashing at the skin he caught.

It didn't hurt.

With the bitten hand, I clasped Eren's mouth shut. Pulling him to me, I trapped him between the crook of my elbow and my torso, keeping my hand close to my gut. Raising my other hand into the air, I closed it into a fist. Eren widened his eyes, before struggling like a caught mouse. I brought my fist down.

And I gave Eren the noogie of the century. Effectively embarrassing him in front of our audience.

Armin was laughing alongside Connie, Mina giggling behind her hand, and Marco just watching on with a smile.

"It was the funniest thing ever!" Connie gasped, using Armin as a support.

"Shut it!" Eren snapped. Growling, he cranked his head to look at me. "Why would you even ask that?!"

"Well, I know that he and our parents have some past history, used to be friends I think? So when he introduced himself I thought 'Ohhh, opportunity' and you know the rest."

Eren scowled for a moment before going limp, hands covering his face. "I can't believe I have to deal with this embarrassment for the rest of my life." He groaned.

I patted his head. "Perks of having me be a part of it."

"This is even worse than that time when we were eleven." He groaned again.

Are you still hung up on that?

"Umm," Mina raised her hand. "Sorry to ask but shouldn't you be out cleaning the bathrooms?" She asked.

Ahhh yes. That dreaded assignment.

After Shadis had punched me, he -and everyone else- noticed that the hit had no effect on me whatsoever. If anything, the way that he cradled his hand for the smallest of moments told me that face beats fist. So instead of being a buffon and hitting me again, he gave me the task of cleaning the shit stalls.

I let go of Eren -ignoring the punch to my ribs-. "Oh yeah, I already finished."

But not fast enough. My god. The smell was horrid.

She raised her brows. "What? How?".

A superhuman body has more uses than just fighting.

I shrugged. "I don't know. Wasn't that hard. Horrible, yes. But it's not too difficult. At least to me, it wasn't." I paused, before glaring. "Also what the hell, Connie? Why would you do that to me?"

He had the decency to look ashamed. "I'm sorry man! I was stressed! I just had to let it out!"

"Wait, what are you guys talking about?" Marco asked.

"This dude left me a 'surprise' right before I went to clean the bathrooms. And it was the worst kind of surprise... I was not amused." Especially since it was a shit caused by fear. Those always smell the worst.

... I've scared many children, that's all I'm going to say.

Mina and Armin cringed. "Gross." They said simultaneously.

Connie grimaced. "... Look, potato girl is still running." He said, changing the subject. Props for the diversion tactic, but be warned... you shall face my fury.

Fury by flour.

"Man, she's been at it for five solid hours. She's really something." Connie praised.

Oh for sure. But I wouldn't call it a run, more like putting one foot in front of the other and praying not to land face first.

Eren nodded. "Yeah, being told to run until she's on the verge of death didn't seem to bother her as much as being told she had to skip meals."

Food is essential for young padawans. Yet, it appears only Sasha understands the importance of having the more than necessary nutrients.

"Daupers is a tiny hunting village in the mountains, isn't it?" Connie asked.

"It is," Armin said. "It's pretty isolated from any other villages too. From what I remember there the only animals around those parts are small in size. It doesn't help that they aren't appearing in the wild as often. So while it is a hunting village, I don't expect it to be for long."

I raised a brow. "And how do you know so much?"

"What? You know that I have plenty of books about what's inside of the walls. Studying the villages is perfectly normal."

... From a military standpoint, yes. But you do that shit for fun. And I'm pretty sure that those books of yours explain nothing about how many animals they catch.

What are you doing in your free time?

Eren looked to the left, spotting a wagon being pulled up the road in the distance. "What's that?"

"They're dropouts. They asked to work in the field instead." Mina answered.

Armin's eyes widened. "Whoa. It's only the first day too..."

Eren sighed, disappointed. "That's just how it is, if you can't cut it here you have to leave." The rest turned to stare. "I can't believe anyone would want to pick rocks and pull plants again..."

"Well sometimes living a boring life is better than dying, Eren." I said. "Not everyone can be strong, mentally, physically, or of will. They know that, so they would be more useful living a life that they can accept rather than dying meaninglessly in front of titans."

"You think that what we're fighting against is futile?" Marco questioned.

"Nope, didn't say that. I know one day we're going to wipe titans from the earth, but they know that they can't. Or else they die... Honestly, they gain my respect in some sort of way."

Marco stood from his perch on the rail. "You're from Shiganshina, right?" He asked.

Nodding, I slung my arms around Eren and Armin. "Yep, same as these two."

"Really?"

"Yeah, I've known these two since childhood. We've lived there all our lives."

"Oh, that means..." Marco stopped, suddenly looking uncomfortable.

"You were there that day, weren't you?" Connie realized.

What, the day when Paradis realized that titans could grow to the size of Thanos's cock? No. We were on vacation in Miami enjoying pina coladas... Fuck. I want one now.

A pina colada, I mean. Not a purple dick.

Marco whipped his head. "H-Hey!"

"Did you see the Colossal Titan?!" Connie stepped forward, excited.

Damn. You're a little menace ain't ya? Don't care about any past trauma we might be harboring.

Where are your black air forces?

Eren spoke before I could. "Y-Yeah?"

"Yes, I saw it." Eren sighed, trying to eat his stew. Although it was kind of hard to enjoy it in peace when a dozen pre-teens were hounding him for answers. But that's what you get for answering a chatterbox's question. On the other hand, I is chilling with Armin and Mikasa. We for real enjoying our meals dawg. Stale bread is the juice. And the stew be bangin.

... I want Mother's cooking.

"Really?" Thomas sounded astonished.

Frankly, I'm astonished why you think you rock those side-burns.

Samuel leaned over the table. "How big is it?"

Big enough for ya mum's mouth. OHHHHHH-

"Enough to look over the wall." Eren said through a spoonful of potatoes.

"What?! I heard it stepped over the wall!" Daz exclaimed.

I heard you were stepped on as a child.

"Me too!" Hannah agreed.

You're a ginger. Your opinion is invalid.

"That's what my village said too!" Franz said.

Okay? And? You have no hair at twelve.

Eren shook his head. "No, it wasn't that big."

Yo dick small, we know.

"What did it look like?" Mina questioned.

Like a bloated blood vessel. Just like your mom. OHHHHHH-

"It had a huge mouth and almost no skin." Eren said, taking another scoop of stew.

... I got nothin.

"What about the armored titan that broke Wall Maria." Samuel asked.

Eren shrugged. "That's what people called it but it looks like an ordinary titan to me."

"Th-Then, what does an ordinary titan look like?!" Samuel asked. Eren stopped eating, shivering for the slightest of moments. Not a second later was the spoon in his mouth again.

"I didn't get to see them that close, I was already on the boats when I first got a glimpse of them. Ask J if anything."

"J?" Connie turned his head, as did everyone else... I had a loaf of bread stuffed in my mouth, trying to chug soup.

I was challenging myself. Leave me alone.

There was a peculiar silence that I didn't particularly like. Swallowing my food to speak, I had forgotten about the bread. What proceeded next was me hacking and coughing like a mad man, followed by punching myself in the chest which ended with a double-handed slam to the stomach.

The soggy bread landed on Mikasa's shoe. Her face shriveled in disgust.

Armin frantically handed her a napkin, which she gladly took... to take off her shoe and throw the piece of leather to the corner of the room.

She was now missing a shoe.... Did Armin just hand her a spare from his coat...?

... Ignoring them, I wiped my mouth clean. Too many people were staring at me. And I didn't like the way that they looked at me. "W-What?"

Daz turned to Eren. "Him?"

Fuck off. You ain't ever gonna get any bitches. You probably have ED with your old ass.

Eren continued to enjoy his meal, uninterested that I almost died. "Yeah, J was there when the Colossal first appeared. He was practically standing next to it."

Eren! Too much info!... Great, now everybody is interested. I don't want to explain myself to them, Eren. It's unnecessary. And I especially don't want you to say how I fucking murdered a horde of titans... Please don't say that. You will end up at the bottom of a lake. Or maybe I'll dig a pit for you, I'm sure that I can find a suitable spot for you in this wasteland. Likely were all the desert lizards shit.

"How is that possible?!" One of the cadets asked.

I would rather just eat than explain myself, so that's exactly what I'm going to do.

"You know that lift that Shiganshina was constructing? Well, his dad was the one that was constructing it, the day of the attack J was right where the Colossal appeared."

... Oh so this is revenge? Revenge for that small and measly joke?... You shall suffer Eren Yeager.

In an instant, they were all upon me. Shouting questions that I had no need nor want to hear. Frankly, they were annoying, so I did what any sane man would do... I slurped the hell out of soup. Armin's soup to be exact.

He looked betrayed.

The background noise seemed to quiet down the louder I chugged 'my' sweet potato and green onion soup. After a minute there was nothing left in my bowl, with an obnoxious smack of my lips I placed the bowl down and turned to face the crowd of rookies, who looked at me with bewildered faces.

Mikasa patted a depressed Armin's back, offering him a loaf of bread.

I held up four fingers. "You all only asked Eren four questions. So it'll be the same for me. I will only answer four. And if you all disagree I answer none, but I guarantee that any answer I

provide will be detailed."

The cadets looked amongst themselves.

"What did the Colossal look like?" Mina asked.

Good question. "It honestly looked like a human without skin. It was covered in bright red pulsing muscle with only some strands of its face looking like a mix of skin and bone. It had no lips so I could see the whole row of its teeth stretch into the back of its jaw. It was big, it would never be able to step over the walls but it peeked its whole head over. There was also steam, burning hot steam that was able to cook a person alive. Some of the nobles I was with that day," I remembered the putrid smell of their corpses. "... well that's how they died."

Marco raised a hand. "And what about ordinary titans?"

"They looked worse than the Colossal. The Colossal looked angry. Furious. But the ordinary titans... they were actual monsters. They only have looks of dumb pleasure spread across their faces, and malice glinting in their eyes. As for how they're built, well it depends on the titan. Most of them look like a normal human body, sometimes fit and sometimes obese. And they don't have a specific size; some can only be as tall as your house while others tower over it. Some also walk weird, it's a bit funny remembering it actually."

"What about that guy that was seen fighting the titans?" Franz asked.

I stared at Eren. "Well, I don't remember much. The Military Police that was escorting the nobles ordered us to run along the wall until we came to the broken gate of Wall Maria. Luckily the Armored Titan had already retreated so we were safe. I never did get to see it though. Anyway, we had no way to get down. Or at least we thought because a couple of minutes later this guy zips up right in front of us. Couldn't have been older than a teenager, and yet he still took us all down to safety. Hell when too many titans came to the gate, he held them all off. Killing them too. I don't know what happened to him as the last thing I ever saw was him disappearing into the buildings."

Throughout my tale I let my eyes trail to Reiner and Bertholdt. I'm sure they recall me using ODM gear to fight all the titans that got through the gate, but I'm sure that they aren't aware that I know their secret. So me lying about not seeing the Armored-Titan along with me being rescued by what is supposed to be me, is setting off a few alarm bells in their head. We met eyes, and I shook my head subtly at their raised eyebrows.

Although they were unnaturally tense.

Looking around the room, I found Annie sitting by herself at one of the cornered tables. And even though she was farther away than the rest, she paid just as much attention -if not more- as the others.

For the next minute, everything was silent, as the children all mulled over the questions that they had. From what I could tell, each had many more questions to ask but they were hesitant. Whether it be from not being able to decide the importance of the question or simple fear of speaking out.

"Do you have any cool scars?" Connie asked curiously. A few sent him dirty looks for wasting their last question.

I on the other hand couldn't have been happier.

"Yeah." I pointed to the rugged scar on the corner of my lip. "I got two more though. Want to see?" He nodded excitedly.

Smiling, I raised the hem of my trousers all the way up to my hip. Muscles sculpted from stone were shown, drawing an impressive amount of awed stares. And in the middle of my thigh, a ragged and sharp scar proudly sat upon my flesh.

"Got this one from an arrow. Wasn't paying too much attention at the time." Some of them laughed. They were probably thinking I got this from fooling around. Or from a hunting accident.

Mikasa was focusing on her stew, keen on not looking at my healed wound. This scar was the one that bothered her the most, not because it was terrible to look at. But the situation, the stress, and the accumulation of fear that happened in that cabin... showing her this scar always reminds Mikasa of the moment.

And she would rather forget it.

Armin came to the rescue again once more, patting her on the back with a sympathetic smile. She returned it.

Is this what pride feels like?

"Alright then, last one." Standing up I raised the hem of my shirt. I heard a few feminine gasps but I decided to ignore those, I got my

shirt over my head and held the fabric between my hands. Shifting my feet, I showed my back.

"O-Oh fuck..."

Yeah. Pretty gruesome, isn't it? Red and leathered skin detailed by both blackened burns and white shades of flesh. It was noticeable that the skin once sagged, but had regained its tightness; evident by the hard and thick creases that were spread all over my lats. Covering the mid and lower back was an eye-catching ripple of muscle, the skin that covered it far too thin to be considered healthy. It was a hideous work of art.

But that's what happens when you get hit by both steam and fire. Like smoking some baby-back ribs, albeit a lot less enjoyable.

"Being so close to the Colossal wasn't all that fun. Honestly, it looks a lot better now than before." Yeah, when I was first taken to see a doctor to treat my injuries... well she almost fainted from how dire it was. She -and many others- couldn't understand how I wasn't in complete and absolute agony. Hell, I even overheard some saying that I should've been dead by the infection.

Thing is though, I just had a really, really good poker face. Also breathing. Breathing through the nose helps subside the pain... kinda. Not really. As for the infection, I don't know. Cells were working hard, I guess?

Mina's hands were shaking. "D-Does it h-hurt?" She squeaked.

I shrugged. "It did. Hurt for a long time, but three years is enough for it to heal. Now it only ever aches from time to time."

Connie smacked his face, groaning. "Argh! Man, I'm sorry."

"Why would you be sorry? You didn't give me this scar, and I wanted to show it. So what's the problem?"

Bertholdt squirmed in his seat. Trembling hands covered his mouth as he shuddered with sweat piling on his brow, threatening to sting his quaking eyes. Reiner shot his hand, clasping it tightly on Bertholdt's shoulder forcing him still. But he himself was no better.

Annie stared into the wood of the table she sat. I couldn't see her reaction all that well. Just her whitened knuckles gripping the hem of her shirt.

Guess they never had to see the aftermath. Sure they witnessed the death and destruction of their attack, but could they honestly say that they stayed to watch just how harsh everyone's lives became. Did they see how many mourned the deaths of their loved ones? The people that were forced to live on the streets? The people that starved? The riots?

The permanently injured?

They spent the past few years in a village in the middle of nowhere. I wonder just how much they know aside from the news that they surely read.

... It's lucky that no one else was paying attention to their reactions, all too preoccupied with my display.

"It-It's... you shouldn't have had to show it that's all." Connie grimaced, severely uncomfortable.

I smiled. "Why? Does it disturb you?"

"What?! No!"

You shouldn't lie, Connie.

And you shouldn't be ashamed to say what you think. It's awful. Appalling. Hell, I'm still disturbed by it. Sure, I might not be affected by PTSD, but it still isn't pleasant for me to look at. It's strange just thinking that I could've attained such a wound. In my first life. my

scars were small, caused by me doing dumb stuff as a child. But this... this came from a hellish ordeal.

"Then it should." I said flatly. "Out in the field, we will be subjected to the titans' wrath. They will take every opportunity to kill you, some of us will die and that's a small mercy compared to those that survive. We will lose arms and legs. Our eyes will be destroyed and our ears will either go deaf or be torn. The fingers on our hands will be sliced and the toes on our feet split."

"We aren't special. Just because we're only twelve doesn't mean that everything's going to end up okay. When we all face off against titans in three years, those of you who think that you're going to live... well, chances are that you're going to die."

"This scar on my back is a reminder to me, and hopefully to all of you of the danger of our profession. Of our vulnerability. Our weaknesses. In seven years, those of us who survive... well some of us will think that dying would've been the better option."

"... And why do you think that?" Marco hesitated.

"Those before us think that. We're going to think that. Those after us will think like that." I shrugged. "We're not special. Just human."

From the look on their faces, it was a hell of a wake-up call. Some were shivering in their seats, and others were gripping the sides of their arms so hard that I thought they would bruise. Others closed their eyes to avoid the sweat that started to drip off their faces.

Eren, Mikasa, and Armin were some of the few that were handling my speech better than others. Mainly because before the trip here, I gave them the same speech. I wanted them to be fully aware of the dangers of this profession, and if they were sure that they wanted to join even knowing the dangers.

The three had readily agreed.

The other people that appeared to be fine were those from Marley. Ymir included. I don't think I need to explain why.

"... So you only got that because of a titan?" A voice asked.

Heads turned to look at the one who dared to speak up. Jean rested his cheek on his hand, a brow raised.

You trying to look real cool. Aren't you? "Yep."

"Well, that sucks," He said. "I feel bad for you. But you see there's something that I can't understand. Why do you think that we're all going to be fighting titans?"

"... Oh right. You said you wanted to join the MP didn't you?"

"That's right." He smirked. "I'm going to live my life inside of the Walls of Sina. enjoying not ever having to fight those monsters."

Careful with your words, don't want Eren to get angry at ya now-

Eren slammed his hands, standing from his seat he marched over to Jean, yanking the collar of his shirt. "So you're a coward. That's what you're telling me?"

Welp.

Jean narrowed his eyes. "Get your hands off me."

"And if I don't?" Eren challenged.

I sighed. Walking over I grabbed the two by their necks and forced them to separate. "Alright, that's enough from the two of you. Were it any other day I would've been happy for a brawl. But we have the first day of training tomorrow, and I don't want Shadis to give you two a harder time just because you decided to scuffle."

The two were still glaring at each other.

Geez. Are rivalries supposed to be this annoying? This childish?

The image of a redhead with freckles popped into my head; Penelope Piper... In my defense, we don't squabble.

We battle.

Anyhow, I directed Eren by his neck, leading him to the table Mikasa and Armin sat.

"J?!" I chopped him on the head.

"Everyone's entitled to their own opinions, Eren. You want to fight titans. He doesn't. That's all there is to it." I made him sit down, although not without a barrage of grumbles. Mikasa offered him an apple, which he angrily bit into.

I turned back to Jean. "What was your name again?"

"Jean."

"Right, Jean... What makes you think that your life will be comfortable?" I asked.

"?"

I dragged my hand across my face. This is the problem with kids. They don't understand that actions have consequences.

"The Military Police are in a tight spot as of now. Their shameful actions revolving around the People's Breach have caused them to be less favorable among the populace. I'll even go on to say that a lot of people hate them. Sure they might not have fought titan's in the past, but can you honestly say that it's still going to be like that after all that's happened?"

Jean was silent. So I continued what I was saying. "Before I left to come to this camp, I was spending my time reading newspapers about what's going to happen to the MP. What changes would

happen? Admittedly there wasn't much to be said, other than that the Military Police will be changing its mission."

And by newspapers, I meant my network. Regi was handing me information regarding the MP. We were worried if the Military Police was going to crack down on people in the Underground as a way to 'improve' their image. If that were to happen it would've been a hassle to progress through our operations. Luckily, we had a member of ours that was able to become an MP a couple of years ago, and she informed us that the changes to the Military Police wouldn't be bothering the Underground.

As far as she knew.

"The Military Policy won't just only be charged with protecting the King anymore. They will be involved much more heavily with the two other branches of the military; the Garrison and the Scouts." Bending down, I gazed into Jean's frozen eyes. "Now tell me, Jean... What do the other two branches deal with?"

Jean didn't speak. His mind racing, words probably clogging his throat. His cool facade was gone, in its place was the face of a worried child.

Sighing, I stood to my full height. "I'm sorry to say this, but the chances of you not ever needing to kill a titan are slim."

"But for what it's worth, I'm sorry." Jean stared. "It's not bad to wish to live comfortably, but we just happened to be born in a time of change."

I felt a breeze. "... And I just now realized that I've been shirtless this whole time. Wow."

Did I really just give a lecture without a shirt?

Man, this is creepy. It's so dark that I can't even see a couple of feet ahead of me. There were some torches lit around, but they didn't help much when they were all so separated.

Need to take care not to trip on some abnormally large pebble.

Next thing I know, I tripped and gravity had become my enemy. Thinking quick, I stretched my arms above my head forcing the two bowls together, then my face firmly hit the ground. Groaning, I raised my head feeling dirt stick to my cheeks. Spitting dust, I turned my head behind to see what I tripped on and... oh it's a person.

Really thought it was a pebble. Small victories, I guess.

Rushing to my feet, I balanced the soup and its covering in one hand, using the other to help the person from the ground.

"Are you alright?" I asked. Grabbing their hand, I gently lifted them up. I noticed two things. Their hands were small, and they didn't weigh very much.

"Ah, yes." A soft voice spoke. In this darkness, there was only one thing that I saw. Bright blue eyes.

"I wasn't hurt." Historia said, giving a small smile. A loaf of bread and a jug of water held to her chest.

Grinning, I struck out my hand. "J Monke."

It took her a moment to figure out what I was doing. With a slight gasp, she quickly shook my hand. "Christa Lenz."

... Christa?

Oh! Right. She's still in that incognito mode of hers. Forgot about that for a minute. Alright, I can play along for now... Y'know tis the prime opportunity for a master of trolling -such as myself- to take advantage of.

Humming, I rubbed my chin. Giving Historia several quick glances. As the seconds ticked by my humming only grew louder.

"Umm...?" Her smile grew weak. "Is... something wrong?" She asked hesitantly.

"Are you sure your name is Christa?"

Yelping, her grip on the jug loosened, stumbling in place trying to juggle it back into her hold. I caught it, handing it back to her shaky hands.

"Y-Yes! Why?!" She stammered, her body practically vibrating.

Just a little more. "You just don't look like a Christa... if anything your name should start with H."

Blue eyes bulged, her mouth dropping by only the smallest of margins. I could see her soul wiggling through her lips.

"Hermione!" I snapped my fingers. "You look like a Hermione!"

The soul slowly receded back into her body. "O-Oh I do?"

"Yep. Sorry for startling you, just wanted to say it." She gave a weary smile, nodding along.

Hehe, pranks.

"Also bringing food for the potato girl, I see." I said, pointing at the items in Historia's hands. Her eyes drifted towards my hands, lighting up upon seeing the stew I carried.

Was she glad she wasn't the only one who had this idea?

Bobbing her head, she smiled. "I felt bad that she couldn't have anything to eat... especially since she seemed so..." She couldn't seem to figure out the right word.

"Devastated?" I questioned.

She smiled. "Yes."

Why does she smile so much? It's weird.

"Want to walk together then? I'm not sure about you but I don't particularly feel like walking in the dark by myself."

"Sure."

The two of us walked side by side, our shoes kicking the dirt the only sound that was heard. Historia was struggling with the jug, she had to sort of throw it in the air for her to catch it before it dipped down, with the process repeating every so often. I offered to carry it for her, but she declined saying how it would be too much of a problem.

I took the jug from her hands and balanced the five pounds of water on the tip of my pinky finger.

She gave me the most adorable pout. Rivaling those of Mikasa's. I laughed, feeling the stiff air slowly disappear as Historia joined in my laughter with her own giggles.

"I'm curious," I hummed in response. "What did you bring for her? It's not much but I was able to get a loaf of bread and a jug of water."

"Nah, it's cool. Potato girl is going to have her dinner," I raised the soup and jug. "Along with her appetizing potato soup and drink."

She smiled. "Well, when you put it that way..."

"Um... I'm sorry to ask but are you sure that... well... is your back actually fine?"

"Hmmm?" Did she witness my grand speech inside the food hall?

"I'm sorry! It's just that it looks so painful..."

I shrugged. "It was. The moment was agony, but time heals most wounds."

"And how long did it take? To heal I mean."

"I think it was a bit more than a year. The pain lasted a little bit longer."

"Was it difficult?"

"Yeah. It was. Damn thing made it so I couldn't have a couple of good nights. It also burned slightly whenever I would sweat. Heh, I almost declared war on the sun because it caused me to heat up so much." She let out a giggle.

In the distance I could see Sasha laying face first on the dirt, it looked like she was unconscious. But as Historia and I got closer I could see her body begin to twitch ever so slightly. Historia began to walk faster until when she first stepped into the torches light did Sasha attack.

Lunging from the ground Sasha took the bread from Historia, causing the blonde girl to fall to the ground with a small shriek. Sasha on the other hand landed on all fours, acting like a ferocious predator with the bread caught in her mouth.

Were her eyes glowing red?

Suddenly her humane instincts seemed to come back to her, and with a small gasp, she took the bread from her mouth, pointing out the obvious. "Bread!"

I mean yeah. What did you think it was? Shrooms?

Historia clutched the jug of water to her chest, "That's all I could get but I saved it for you," Sasha cranked her head. "But you should drink some water first."

... Why the fuck is there sparkles? Did she just brighten up the fucking area with her kindness?! Will I do that too!?

Sasha grabbed Historia by the shoulders. "Are you god?!"

"Ehhhhh, I don't think so." Sasha whipped her head. "I mean because if you consider her god, you gotta consider me one too." I said, raising the bowl cover from the soup allowing the smell of potatoes and green onions to waft over Sasha's nose.

She teared up. "God!" She cried, praying to me.

Huh... My ego did not need that boost right now.

Giving her the soup, she carefully took it from my hands acting as if it would disappear at the slightest notice. Gingerly she took a sip and cried out in happiness.

Sharing a glance with Historia, the both of us shrugged.

... Oh look, it's Ymir.

"Hey, what are you three doing?" She called. The two downed girls gasped at the new presence, and like a starving animal, Sasha began to devour the loaf of bread, occasionally sipping the soup I gave her.

"Um, she spent the whole day running." Historia stammered.

Ymir raised a brow "So you're just trying to do a good deed?"

What's wrong with that? I asked

The exhaustion finally seemed to catch up to Sasha. Once she finished her food she slumped into Historias lap asleep.

You just achieved every single pubescent boy's dream right now Sasha.

"Did you do that for the potato girl?" Ymir questioned. "Was the effort worth what you got out of it?"

Historia stayed silent.

"Well, it doesn't matter." She sighed. "Anyway, I'm carrying her to bed." Bending down, she hauled Sasha onto her shoulder. The unconscious girl gave a groan of discomfort. Taking Sasha from Ymir I held her up by her pits and motioned Ymir to turn around. She rolled her eyes but did what I wanted nonetheless. Placing Sasha on Ymir's back, the freckled girl only gave a grunt of effort to adjust Sasha into a more comfortable position.

"Aren't you doing a good deed too?" Historia said.

"I'm doing her a favor so she'll owe me," Facing Sasha, Ymir smiled. "I'm looking forward to a lot of fun from this idiot."

She turned to face me. "And you. I feel like you're going to be the most entertaining."

I grumbled. "What am I a jester?"

She smirked. "I think you're too burnt out to be one." Historia choked in shock.

Rolling my eyes, I turned to the still downed Historia and offered her my hand. Realizing her position she quickly grabbed my hand allowing me to pull her up. Hastily dusting the dirt from her skirt she gave a smile.

I turned to face Ymir, only to find her already walking away with Sasha on her back.

Huh. She's pretty strong.

"Maybe you should catch up to them." I said to Historia.

"And what about you?" She asked

Caring or nosy? Probably caring.

"Well, I kind of like how the air smells right about now. So I was planning on walking around for a few minutes. But you and everyone else should go to bed. We're going to wake up before the sun tomorrow. And it's already late as it is."

Widening her eyes, Historia gave a nod. Scampering off to catch up to Ymir.

Watching her go, I slowly took in a breath of air, relishing the chill that invaded my lungs before relieving it through my mouth.

This felt nice... On to businesses then.

I turned to face behind, watching as three figures slowly walked toward me. "Y'know I never got your names..."

Annie. Bertholdt. Reiner.

/Omake- That time we were eleven/

With the construction of the homes being made, Father often took Eren and I on trips to villages in Wall Rose so we could see the homes being built. However, we were never allowed to help. So we got bored quickly.

We couldn't bring our family night board games with us, so we relied on the use of tag, hide and seek, and many other physical activities to entertain us. Until we got bored of those too. Eventually, we decided to take advantage of various supplies used for buildings.

This is why Eren and I are currently dueling with foot-long rods of metal, in front of a crowd of workers on their lunch breaks.

I pierced my rod in the air, trying my best at a fencing form.
"Engarde!"

Eren mirrored me, shouting his war cry. The two of us rushed at each other, the clangs of metal reverberating through the air. Our wrists shook from the vibrations of the weapons as we battled. The roars of the crowd fueled our battle lust, the two of us began to strike harder and faster until our hands began to shake.

But we couldn't break through each others guard-

"Parry this you fucking casual!" Eren bellowed, throwing a rock.

I blocked it with the rod. "Hey! I was larping here!"

"HA!" He pointed and laughed.

"You fool! You haven't even damaged me!" Spinning on my heel I picked up a log of wood that was being used as a seat by some of the workers. "This is how you do ranged combat!"

Hauling it above my head, I roared my battle cry. "YEET!"

"OH SHIT-"

After that Eren was diagnosed with a bruised chest. And broken pride.

Faster chapter than before right? Glad you didn't have to wait half a year again?

Yeah, well it's still a bit too slow for my liking. I don't really have an excuse to tell you guys. I just kind of pushed writing to the side, despite my promise. I'm not too proud of myself at the moment.

I'll do my best to be better in the future.

On a side note did you guys enjoy the cliffhanger? I was debating whether or not to include the Trios's interaction in this chapter but I figured that this interaction is something you guys

were waiting for. Just holding it off until the next chapter would be something that would make you all look forward to it.

I hope you all laughed at the Omake. I'm planning on doing more. Maybe after each chapter finishes. Unless the chapter is serious.

And this wasn't that long of a chapter. Only 8.6k words, but I hope that you all still found it enjoyable nonetheless. Next chapter will probably be longer considering that I'm planning on having much more scenes than this chapter.

But then again, writing such a short chapter was much less of a pain than 20k. I'm thinking of diverting chapters length depending on how important the chapter will be. This chapter was just me introducing the cast, not really much plot.

Alright, now time to give my thoughts. So most of the material you guys saw was from the anime and manga, and boy did I hate copy and pasting. Thankfully there were a couple of scenes where I could freely explore my creativity.

I found the chapter a little stale though. But I can guarantee that the next chapter will be much more interesting.

Also if you guys want, you can re-read the story. During the holidays I went back and updated the previous chapters, especially chapter 5. So if you want, go and give the story a re-read for better grammar. Or in chapter 5's case, an added scene.

Remember to criticize and review!

Reunion

"Look who it is." I smiled, walking forward towards the three. As I reached out for a hug, the three backed away slightly.

Smile dimming, I stopped. "Okay so I take it you guys aren't big on emotional affection. No problem, I can understand that. And I'll be honest, that was kind of weird of me." They remained silent, just staring at me.

Oh my lord. Is this how it's going to play out?

"Okay? Well, do you guys want to join me for a walk?" I asked, the three looked at each other and exchanged looks, Reiner turned to face me again and said a simple. "Sure."

Grinning, I made my way over to the three watching as ever so slowly they tensed up. I waved for them to follow me as I walked by.

In silence, we walked together through the dimly lit paths. "Nice night aint it?" That was my pathetic attempt to strike up a conversation. They shifted uncomfortably, not answering.

... Awkward. I know that the three of them are paranoid, especially with me, but c'mon! I deserve some fucking small talk at the very least! Sighing, I diverted from the path aiming for the woods surrounding the training wasteland. The three followed without question nor complaint.

Once we were deep enough into the tree's foliage, I turned to face them once more. They were guarded, even more so than before. "Alright, so you guys wanted to talk to me right? I thought that this would've been as good as any since I didn't want any of our instructors to nag at us for staying out late." Sitting down, I motioned for the three to join me.

They didn't... Pricks.

Look, I understand that for you guys this is supposed to be a serious situation and all, but c'mon man! If I didn't know what you three were I would've been offended by your rudeness.

Yes, I know that I'm a hypocrite. And I'm proud of it.

"Alright you guys don't want to sit down, that's cool. The grass is a little damp anyway." I admitted. "But you guys still haven't answered my question, what are your names?"

They turned to face each other, and they did that thing with their eyes again.

"Annie Leonhart."

"Reiner Braun."

Bertholdt Hoover

"Annie, Reiner, and Bertholdt." I repeated. "Cool names. Do you all still remember mine?"

"J." Reiner said.

"Just J?" I raised a brow. "Guess I didn't tell you all my last name. Well, J Monke is at your service." I bowed my head slightly.

The three remained silent.

Sighing, I placed my hands behind my back and leaned into them. "I'm going to assume that you guys don't have much social interaction besides each other. Because at this point we would be having a small conversation... this is just plain awkward."

That seemed to start them slightly.

"Sorry." Reiner said. "We're just a little shocked to see you here. We don't really know what to say."

"Ahhh, yeah that makes sense. Although I'm going to say on a whim that she just doesn't like to talk, and he's just awkward like that." Reiner chortled.

"Spot on, am I right?"

"How'd you know?"

Bertholdt snapped his head. "Reiner!"

"What? It's true though!"

"No, it's not! We're dealing with a weird situation right now, and I don't know how to handle it." He paused, turning his head to Annie. "I'm not awkward right?"

"You are." Was her reply.

I laughed at the small flush of red that Bertholdt's cheeks undertook. "It's fine dude. Happens to the best of us." Reiner slapped his hand on Bertholdt's shoulder, causing him to stumble slightly before shooting his friend a glare.

"Alright now that the 'ice' is broken, what did you guys want to ask me? There have to be some things you want to ask me. Unless you three want to celebrate becoming friends or something."

"How did you find us?" Annie said coldly. "When we were in that broken house, how did you know we were there?"

Ok, then. Straight to the big questions.

"That? Well, I was making my way to the gate, the Armored Titan had just destroyed," Reiner stiffened. "I saw the thing run towards some of the houses and disappear. I don't know what I was thinking at the time, but I was curious as to where it went." The other two tensed. "It was a bit suicidal on my part, after all if it was still there it could've killed me. But man, you should've seen the relief I had when I just found you guys hiding away."

"Why be afraid?" Annie asked. "You showed yourself to be competent and brutal when you killed that horde."

"Well yeah." I shrugged. "I was risking my life. That horde was threatening my family, and with the Garrison not doing anything I was sort of forced into action. And just so you know I was terrified the whole time."

I wasn't.

"But, still you're insanely powerful. I can help but wonder how..." Bertholdt muttered slowly.

"You and me both. I've been strong since I've been a little kid. I was able to carry a good two-hundred pounds when I was seven," Their eyes widened. "And when the wall first broke down I just happened to be strong enough to fight against the titans."

I rubbed my chin. "Now that I think of it. What were you guys doing in Shiganshina? The whole district knew me as the 'Devil Child' and I even familiarized myself with the whole population, especially kids my age. So how come I never saw you guys? Were you visiting?"

"You could say that..." Reiner hesitated to say. "We were only supposed to be in the district for a couple of days... with our parents. But then the Colossal appeared."

"Yeah, that thing. Man, if that didn't haunt me for a good while." Bertholdt winced slightly, Annie made sure to slap his arm to force him out of it.

"You said that the Colossal caused that scar right?" Bertholdt asked.

"This old thing, yeah. I had a front-row view of when it first showed up. Sad thing is that I was far too close to it, and this is how I paid the price. Although you guys should already know that from my story."

"It's a vicious thing." Annie said softly.

"Sure. I don't mind it that much now. It's just a part of me. An ugly part, but a part nonetheless."

"That reminds me." Reiner mumbled. "Why did you say that you didn't know much about the 'kid' that fought the horde, even though that was you?"

"Well, I didn't want the kids to hound me." They raised their brows. "They're just little kids that gawk over everything. If they knew that I was the guy that killed a horde of titans, at nine... Well, they would just lose their shit."

Reiner nodded, seeming to understand the logic. Bertholdt spoke up. "But aren't you the same age as them? Why are you acting like they're brats?"

"Wow. That's a really good question there Bert." He flushed. "And to answer it... well I've always been more mature than the rest of my peers. Always had a gray view of the world. And the wall getting breached just sort of reinforced my view. Maybe it was due to the deaths that I saw. From falling debris. The sound of soldiers dying. And then my actions at killing titans. I realized just how gruesome the world is." I jerked a thumb at my back. "And this was just the cherry on top."

"As far as I know, the only ones that know the true horrors of the world are those that witnessed Shiganshina. That includes me and three others. You guys too. But the rest... Well, they are optimistic. That Jean guy was so confident that he would live an easy life in the Brigade, but his dream came crumbling down once he realized that nothing would remain the same. The others are the same. They're hopeful about a future they could have, not realizing how gruesome of a future it could be."

"Is that why you gave that lecture?" Annie inquired. "To force them out of that mentality."

Chuckling, I shook my head. "I wish. I just cracked their realm of possibilities. They need to experience for themselves the cruelty of the world, in order to fully realize how dangerous their lives will become. Words can only do so much after all."

Our conversation came to a pause, as the three mulled over my words.

I wonder if I was able to connect to them in some way. They thought that they were going to be heroes for Marley. Tasked with taking care of the Eldian threat they would return home to enjoy their 'rewards' and enjoy the time spent with their family and friends. Instead, they came to realize they were committed to a monstrous task. Nowhere near a million people died like in canon, but the lives of 20,000 will still lay heavily on anyone's soul.

"You say you were called a 'Devil Child'?" Bertholdt asked.

Grinning, I nodded. "I'm glad that you picked up on that."

Reiner frowned. "Did you do some bad things during your youth?"

... Yeah. Beat a couple of people here and there. Killed some too. Played a couple of pranks. Worried the hell out of those I cared about.

But I'm glad to say I didn't try to commit genocide...

"Sure." I shrugged. "If you consider me pranking the absolute hell out of anyone I came across."

Bertholdt raised a brow. "Pranking?"

"Yep. I was a mischievous kid back then." I smiled at the memories. "In Shiganshina there was this monthly bargain sale. The price of a single product would go down to devastatingly low prices, and everyone was... well they were eager. Myself included."

"One time, the item of the month was bacon, and let me tell you the people went crazy. There had to be at least a hundred people waiting in the town's square hoping to get stocked up on bacon for the next several weeks. There were these kids that were rushing to the square, and I didn't want any extra competition, so I went out of my way to steal some baker's flour and cut them off at a vendor street." I chortled. "I threw the freaking flour at their faces, and while they were sputtering and crap I tried to make my getaway by using the leftover flour as a smoke bomb, the thing is it only went up to my shins."

Bertholdt chuckled.

"Seeing as my plan had failed I decided to do the next best thing..."

Reiner grinned. "Which was...?"

"I decided to flip the skirt of a lady! I revealed her lacy panties to the world! She even gave one of those classic squeals!" Reiner guffawed, caught off-guard. Bertholdt was no better, with him trying and failing to hold back his own laugh.

Annie only gave the tiniest of smirks, showing that she even found the thought amusing.

"After that, I made my way to the square, and it was only then did I realize that those kids wouldn't have been any competition. They and that lady suffered for nothing! Nothing!" I giggled. "I wanted that bacon though. So you know what I did...?"

"What?" Reiner sniggered.

"I grabbed a shovel... and just went fucking crazy." I cackled. "All you could see were adults terrified of a five-year-old, who was beating the *fuck* out of everyone."

Reiner lost it. He wheezed, chest puffing in and out as he was forced to place his hands on his knees. Bertholdt held him steady, but his

tearing eyes and bloated cheeks said that he was on the verge of joining him too.

Annie snorted.

Laughing, I took a deep breath and tried to talk, but I just delayed a desperate wheeze. Bertholdt shook and in the next second he was roaring with laughter, leaning on Reiner who couldn't support his weight, and the two fell.

Raising her arm, Annie placed her mouth on the crook of her elbow, releasing a shuddering breath.

I barely managed to control my laughter for a few precious seconds. "I-I was so high on a-adrenaline th-that," I had to wheeze for a second. "That I said 'who wants to die you stupid sons of bitches!'... I was five at the time! The faces of those people hearing a literal child curse... was way too funny!"

Reiner was punching the ground, tears rolling down his cheeks. Bertholdt laid on his back, his face had turned red and he was gasping for air.

Annie was giggling. She was fucking *giggling* .

A total win in my book.

A few minutes passed as we tried to calm down, but even then a few chuckles were let out despite our best attempts.

"Oh god, I haven't laughed like that in a long time." Reiner said, his face still a bit flushed. Although nowhere close to Bertholdts.

"That I can believe. Although I'm pretty sure this is the first time she's ever laughed." I said, pointing at Annie, who had managed to put on her poker face once more.

I need her to teach me how to do that.

"Well, it's late now. And we need to get to bed if we want to be functioning in the morning." The three nodded. I raised my hand. "Mind helping me up?" I asked, staring expectantly at Reiner.

He looked confused for a second, but slowly he reached out and pulled me to my feet. I grinned at him, and I was glad to see that he returned it.

"There's just one more thing I need to ask." Annie said.

"Shoot."

"Did you see the Armored before it destroyed the gate?"

Humming, I thought about the question a few times. "Yeah, I did. I was able to see it break through the wooden barricade."

"So what do you guys think?" Reiner asked his friends.

"Well, I'm sure that he doesn't know our secret. As far as I'm concerned he doesn't seem to suspect anything." Bertholdt said.

"That's good." Reiner sighed. "I really didn't want to end up killing him, he was a nice enough guy."

"He's going to die either way." Annie remarked. "It's why we're here in the first place," She shot Reiner a glare. "Or did you perhaps forget, Reiner?"

"No, I didn't." He grunted. "It's just that... I don't even know..."

The three walked in silence until they had to head to their respective cabins. Bertholdt shot Annie a wave, which she ignored. His face fell slightly, and Reiner led him towards the boy's cabin.

Annie trudged along the path, her mind a haze. She didn't trust a variable like J. They weren't expecting someone to be so powerful on Paradis. She remembered the shock she felt when she saw him fly

past them, using a rope as a makeshift ODM gear. The brutality he exhibited when he used the blade attached. It was a horrific fascination to see a titan's neck get sawed through. And if she thought that he was amazing with just a rope, then him using ODM gear was just downright godly. He handled that horde as if it was a game. And how could she ever forget the... the *monster* he became at the gate. Tearing napes apart with his hands! His bloody hands!

... He was young too. Just nine years old if she remembered right. That shouldn't even be possible. It couldn't be possible... and yet the memory plays on her head on repeat almost every day. While the thought of just how powerful he would become when he grows older has plagued her for many nights.

She shivered at the image.

Reiner and even Bertholdt to an extent were far too optimistic. Living here for so long had changed their views on the people.

Her's hadn't... she likes to tell herself.

Their mission was to kill every single one of them. From the freshest newborns to the oldest and sickliest of them, they were all fated to die. They... they just all had to. And J was at the top of the list. He was an anomaly. A creature that couldn't live or else risk their entire mission. He would have to be one of the first to die... and soon.

But the question is how-

Something clamped down on her shoulder. Heart leaping into her throat, Annie whipped her head preparing to hit whatever was touching her. J towered behind her. Despite the shot of dread that trickled up her spine, the friendly smile he had put her at ease slightly.

"Sorry did I scare you?" He asked.

"Just startled me, that's all." She glared. "Did you need something?"

J sheepishly rubbed the back of his neck. "Umm, yeah..." His face reddened. "See I just wanted to ask you something."

... Oh gods... He wasn't asking her out, was he? Slumping her shoulders, she bit back the groan that threatened to escape her throat. And here she thought that he was at least a little bit better than the rest of those children. He'd have fought titans, he was brutally scarred. And yet, he was just as immature as the rest. Would she have been the same? If she was born on this island instead of Marley?

Closing her eyes with a sigh, she said. "Out with it."

"Why are there Marleyans on my island?"

...

...

...

Eyes snapping open, Annie stumbled back a step, fear filling her stomach to the brim.

How?! How?! How did he know?! That shouldn't be possible! No one on Paradis should know what Marleyans were! Could it be that they were wrong? No, she and the other two made sure to know whether Eldians knew about Marley.

But as she lived and breathed, there was someone who knew. And he was standing right in front of her.

With his arms crossed over his chest, Annie slowly realized just how intimidating of a figure this boy was. And that all hue of red was gone from his face. Was she mistaken? Did he trick her?! Was that his plan?!... Was it anger?

"What?" She hated to hear herself squeak.

"I said," He growled. "What are Marleyans doing on my island?"

To hell with it! Forget their incognito, he knew who they were!

Her hand was brought up to her mouth, and as she brought her mouth down. She closed her eyes in anticipation for the pain and the course of lightning to fill her being.

Instead, she bit nothing but air.

Opening her eyes, Annie slowly began to notice a pain traveling through her arm. Cranking her head, she saw that her arm was bent to the side.

Horribly broken.

A harrowing throb rocked her limb, and then she began to feel the immeasurably agony. Her mouth opened to let out a cry, but instead, she found a leathered hand clamping it shut.

She felt her body tremble, her legs suddenly felt numb and her heart felt like it was about to fall. She tried to bite his hand, but a squeeze forced her mouth shut.

J gripped the wrist of her undamaged arm, tugging her towards the forest. "How about we go somewhere more private?"

No... No. No! Oh fuck! Where was he taking her?!

Struggling against his grip, she kicked and desperately tried to claw with her trapped arm. Each struggle caused a horrendous pain to be felt in her broken arm. But no matter what she did, J continued to drag her without effort.

Everything was happening so fast! She had no idea what to do! She couldn't transform! Or-Or anything! Wait-Wait-Wait! She just needs to bleed! That's it! Blood and intent!

Shutting her teary eyes, she prepared to bite off her tongue.

...

...

...

Annie slowly opened up her eyes. J's hand was forcing her jaw closed, her tongue uselessly hitting the back of her teeth... but that's not where she felt pain. She trailed her gaze lower, toward the hand that J had in his grip.

Oh. Annie thought, staring blankly at her crushed fingers. Saliva escaped her mouth as she wailed into J's hand, slobbering it as he muffled her cries.

He frowned. "If you even think about biting your tongue again, I'll break your jaw." He paused. "Unless I should do it as a precaution?"

Annie shook her head frantically, tears splashing to the ground with each shake.

"Good. You just made this much easier." J let her fingers and face go. Annie scrambled back using her feet to kick herself away. She wasn't even a foot away when J clasped the back of her neck, fingers digging into the sides of her nape.

She froze. The thought of him tearing her neck apart took over her mind as she shook in place. She felt like vomiting. Feeling so very close to death.

Thankfully, J only forced her to continue their walk into the woods. His fingers never left her nape, and yet never pinched deeper into her skin. As they passed the boundary between dried dirt and forest bushes, Annie had to swallow the bile that threatened to rise to her throat. There was no escape now. Looking around, they were deep into the foliage of the woods. She could barely see the fire from the torches in the distance.

"Now then," His voice caused a shiver to crawl up her spine. "Let me ask for the third time. What are Marleyans doing on my island?"

Annie stayed silent.

"You do realize that I easily broke the bones in your body without much effort or thought? Do you want me to torture you for answers, Annie?" She trembled at the thought. "And considering that you're a Warrior, you should be able to heal up pretty fast. How does that sound? Me breaking your arms and legs throughout the night?" J pinched her neck just a little tighter.

It was a horrifying thought. Taking in ragged breaths of air, Annie tried to keep her composure, or what little of it she had left.

How could someone so young be so cruel?

"Well, that's what I would've done if I hadn't known what you were all planning." J said. Annie felt his fingers leave her neck, an immeasurable relief flooding her body. But it disappeared just as quickly as J placed his burly hand upon her shoulder and forced her to take a seat on the damp forest ground. J followed suit, sitting in the space in front of her, his cold brown eyes gazing at her. "I mean it's not hard what you guys were planning, the complete and total annihilation of Paradis, and to find the Founding Titan. Or the coordinate as some like to call it."

... How...?

"By the way, breaking the wall was such a dick move." He grunted. "If it wasn't for me barricading the opening you guys made, then a lot more people would've died."

"... That was you?" He was the one that blocked their entrance? That pile of wood had almost fallen on top of their heads! If it wasn't for Reiner having to dive out of the way they would've died! And they still almost did, the moment that Reiner had hit the ground titans had latched onto him, trying to chew through his armor.

If it wasn't due for luck and Reiners's determination, they would've died outside of the walls.

J smirked. "Everything is because of me." With his hands crossed over the back of his head, J leaned back to the ground staring at the stars that dotted the night sky.

"Everyone that I wanted to save is alive and well. And everyone that I want dead is rotting in the streets... Or well most. I still haven't completed the list," He shrugged from the ground. "But I'm getting there."

Annie recoiled, J's face now dangerously close to her own. How had he managed to raise himself so fast?! "Anyhow, enough about me. What I want to know is you."

"M-Me?" She stuttered, the familiar dread filling her body once more.

"Yep. The Female Titan. How does it feel? To be a shifter, I mean? Bet it feels great. Well until your life is forced to end after thirteen years, and you become titan food for your 'friends'," He quoted. "But then again great power comes with a price. I suffered hell to get where I am. Although I can't help but wonder how close to hell you got. I hear training to be a Warrior candidate is terribly difficult. "

"Do you ever think about how much suffering families had to endure after your... debacle?"

"I mean, I've seen some fucked up shit. Children and mothers starving on the streets. Men dying in alleys. Hell. Men even died on rooftops during the Peoples Breach. Can't ever forget about that first teenage victim. I forget what his name is. And I really can't bring myself to care sadly enough. So I get to thinking, do you even care about what you've to these people?"

"I mean sure there are some assholes inside of these walls. Even killed a couple myself if you haven't figured it out. But I like to think that there are a lot of good people. I mean if you had to choose who

had to be your neighbor, who would you pick? A Marleyian who would want to see your head on a stick? Or an Eldian that could make the best snickerdoodles you could ever dream of?"

"Answer." J said coldly.

"... The... The Eldian..."

A smile bloomed on his face. "Right? The Eldian is so much nicer. But I'm sure you already know that. I mean, you've lived with Eldians for these past three years. Bet they treated you right. Bet they treated Reiner and Bertholdt right."

"Didn't they?" His tone was mocking, and it made Annie want to punch him. But she was too terrified to even follow up with the idea. It didn't help that her arms were practically useless... it also didn't help that she knew that he was right.

She stayed silent, glaring at the ground.

"Well, I already know the answer." J sighed. "So I just can't help but think. Just how guilty do you feel with the knowledge that you killed so many nice people. Destroyed so many nice families..."

Yes... they did kill so many. And it did make her feel guilty. She's never thought about the lives she ended, sure she knew what she did, accepted it even... But never once did she stop to look back on her actions. Not even when she desperately wanted to just stop and think, she forced herself to focus on the mission.

But she can't rightly do that right now, and the guilt was starting to surface.

"Do you have family, Annie?" J said suddenly. She flinched, the question catching her off-guard. Why would he ask that?... And instantly dozens of possibilities surged through her head, all revolving over her father... and what J would do to him.

Annie pursed her mouth shut, determined not to speak. Even if her heart hammered inside her chest.

J smiled.

"Ahh, so you do..." He drawled, the words dancing on his tongue. "Tell me, do you care about them?"

Annie remained silent.

J frowned, exasperated. "Answer."

Despite her will, his voice compelled her to speak. And she cursed herself for not resisting.

"... Yes..."

"Well, that's good to hear. Always nice to see people have some type of love in their lives." J's eyes bore down on her. "And it's always a shame for it to be taken away..."

"Leave my father out of this!" Annie snapped before her eyes widened once she realized what she said.

"Father, eh?" J smirked, sending shivers down her spine. "Well you see Annie, I can't rightly do that. Not because he's your father or anything like that, but because he lives in Marley. And I kind of have a grudge against Marley at the moment."

A grudge?

"Let me ask you this, Annie..." J leaned forward, interlocking his fingers. "You want to see your father again, don't you? More than anything else, right?"

She did. She wanted to see him desperately. And she would. Or at least she thought she would. But that was before she met J.

Annie gave a shuddering nod.

J smiled.

"Well, what do you think about him coming to Paradis, instead of you returning to Marley?"

... Huh?

J leaned back, hands clasping the back of his head. "I know that you don't think very highly of Marley, and I'm inclined to believe that your father doesn't either. You already know how Eldians treat one another, it's a nice community for moving don't ya think?"

... It was... nice. Her and her father living among these people, without being subjugated to hate every day. Living the rest of her years in peace. Not being a tool to Marley. It sounded... perfect.

"That image that you're thinking in your head, can come to life." J whispered behind her ear. Annie blanched, startled at the close proximity.

How did he even get behind her?!

J trailed his hand around her shoulders, circling her as if she was prey. "All you have to do is follow my lead. Be my subordinate."

What? Subordinate? Was he a leader of something? Was he involved with the government of Paradis?

"D-Do you work for the government?"

"Hardly." He snorted. "I'm a revolutionary. The leader to be exact."

Him? A leader? How was he able to do that? He's only twelve for fuck's sake! Does he lie about his age?... No it takes years to start something like a revolution, and he couldn't have been that large his entire life. But how? Do soldiers follow his command? Are they afraid of him? But wouldn't that lead to rebellion? Actually, how is he able to start a revolution? Wait, did he even start it? Or is he following

someone else's footsteps? How many people know about a revolution? How many follow him?... Just how powerful is J?

Many other thoughts surged through her mind but Annie was only able to ask a simple question.

"What?"

"If you want me to answer more of your questions I'm going to need an answer from you first, Annie."

"... Why..." Annie swallowed her spit. "Why s-should I follow you?"

J stopped his prance in front of her, and slowly lowered his face until it was inches away from hers. An unsettling grin plastered his face, and baleful eyes gazed into her own.

"Because..." J leaned down, passing her face and whispering into her ear. "I can kill you easily. I can kill titans with my *bare* hands easily."

She remembered the scene at the docks. The massacre he caused. The devil he became.

J raised himself back up. "What does that tell you about me?" He asked.

"That you're strong." She whispered. "Strong to the point it's physically impossible... But..." Annie swallowed her fear. "But, besides strength what do you have? Why should I trust you?"

J looked surprised, whether it be from the question or that she *questioned* him, she didn't know. But then a twinkle appeared in his eyes. Annie felt her heart stop when he suddenly crouched before her, his hands on her shoulders;

"... Plans." J grinned from ear to ear. "I have *many* plans..."

When Annie stared into J's eyes, she felt a different type of fear fill her. She didn't know what it was. It wasn't a fear of J. Not her fearing for her life. But... a fear that was telling her she wasn't ever going to be prepared.

"And I'll tell you what I have instored..." J said.

To Annie, the world had stopped. It was as if everything was drowned out and she could do nothing but stare blankly at J, as millions of thoughts rushed into her head. Hearing J speak was the equivalent of hearing a mad man rave and rant. But the difference here was that what J had said... made sense.

"... Y-You're crazy." Annie breathed, a trembling -and healed- finger pointed at J. "You're fucking crazy!"

J gave a wicked smile. "Yep."

"It's never going to work!" Annie gasped. "So many things can go wrong! No! Will go wrong!"

J tutted, his finger wagging in the air as if he was scolding her. "Everything will go right."

"How?!" Annie screamed. "How will it ever work!?"

He had the gall to smile as if amused.

"Because I am the one who thought of it." He said. "I have created every scenario inside my head. Every scenario that could happen. Everything that could go wrong. I have a plan. I know what to do. Because I've spent every waking moment thinking and improving my plans. Every fight that could happen! Every situation! Every shifter! Everything that could happen already has a place in my head!"

... He was insane. Completely and utterly out of his mind... And she was far more terrified.

J had a radiant grin. "Annie, think hard about what you're going to do. I have treated you as both an ally and an enemy. And I have offered you a choice. Become my subordinate..." His face darkened, and the air in her lungs escaped. "Or become my enemy."

"... If I refuse... will you kill me?"

J beamed. "No."

Annie expected to be relieved, but instead, her heart stopped. And she didn't know why. J said that he wouldn't kill her... but... but he could always lie. And he would consider her an enemy. He has no remorse for his enemies, that she was certain. He told her his plans. Told her what he would do to achieve them. He will be cunning and cruel in the future. A simple lie... would be nothing to him.

And -she slowly realized-, there were always worse fates than death.

"C'mon, Annie..." He outstretched his hand. "... Shake this poor *devil's* hand."

This chapter was... a bit out there, I'll admit. Mainly because of J practically torturing Annie, but I really wanted to showcase the two sides of J. The side where he's the happy friend everyone likes, and the apathetic devil that he becomes for his enemies. I like to say that it's kind of like having two personalities that he can switch into at any time. And I'm not sure if you guys remember but J has the skill of Killing Intent, which he used on Annie in this chapter. It's subtle and kind of obvious but he uses it whenever Annie states that her heart stops or she seems to lose her breath.

And as of right now, only Annie has had the misfortune to witness both of them. But will she be able to tell the tale? Really depends on what choice she makes. But that is a secret till the next chapter.

On a side note the more I write of J the less of an SI I consider him to be, and more of an actual character he is becoming. And I couldn't be happier.

Scarlet

/Year 845 - Three Months After The Colossal's Attack/

Regi's heart hammered in his chest, a relentless drumbeat of fear and despair. He stood there, a mere cog in the vast, grinding machinery of violence, surrounded by thousands of others who shared his fate. It was an impending war, but to Regi, it felt like a one-way journey into the abyss.

In his twenty years of life, he had endured nothing but hardship and brutality. He was a street rat, scrounging for meager scraps of food, enduring savage beatings week after week, and becoming the very thing he despised, a violent enforcer himself, striking others just to survive. It was the cruel reality of life as a member of the Ackers Clan.

Regi's thoughts drifted back to the day he had been coerced into this life, forced into the ranks of the Ackers Clan by a gang that was collecting every available body from the streets to bolster their numbers. The reason? The Totans Gang was doing the same, and it had become a grotesque arms race, not for weapons, but for bodies.

The gang had plucked him from the mean streets, a desperate child forced to choose between joining their ranks or facing a merciless beating. Regi, at the tender age of twelve, had made the only choice he could.

Eight years later, he stood shoulder to shoulder with three thousand others, all belonging to the Ackers Clan, while across from them, a mere block away, loomed the Totans, a monstrous force of four thousand soldiers ready for war. It was an absurd gathering of desperate thugs, all united in their indifference to the cause they were about to kill and die for.

Regi couldn't fathom how this had come to pass. In the depths of the Underground, among the desperate thugs, they were all here, united by a war they cared nothing for. Some, of course, were true believers, and most were mere foot soldiers, but the rest, the majority, were mere pawns. They followed orders like obedient dogs, motivated only by the fear of punishment. This was the bitter truth for the majority of the Ackers, and perhaps for the Totans as well.

The absurdity of it all struck him like a slap in the face. In this subterranean abyss, amidst this gathering of desperate thugs, they were poised to wage war over something they cared nothing about.

Regi's mind raced, searching for a reason behind this senseless conflict. The Ackers and Totans, the undisputed overlords of the Underground, had clashed in skirmishes, but nothing of this magnitude. It was all vendettas and drunken brawls. They had avoided each other's territories on the streets, for God's sake.

The catalyst remained a mystery. It could have been power, control, or perhaps a desire for oblivion. For all Regi knew, it might have been sparked by something as trivial as an illicit affair.

He couldn't fathom the truth.

Before the Ackers Army stood a man, Robert Gailes, their supposed leader. Clad in an extravagant white suit adorned with glistening rings and chains, he stood as a stark symbol of opulence amidst their poverty. Regi despised him, loathed the stark contrast between their lives. Gailes lived in luxury while Regi wore the same tattered clothes for a week.

It rankled him that a pimp held sway over an army, and it gnawed at him that there was no conceivable way to reverse their roles, to don the trappings of power himself, but such dreams were naught but futile wishes. Time was not his ally, and the grim certainty of his impending demise weighed heavily on him.

Regi's heart ached with a yearning for a different life, for the mere chance to rewrite the cruel script of his existence. He wished for the luxury of time, even just a few short years, to claw his way out of this abyss of despair and into a position of power. But that wish, that fragile dream, felt as distant as a fading star in an inky-black sky. He knew, deep down, that it was nothing more than a futile fantasy.

Time had betrayed him, slipping through his grasp like grains of sand through clenched fists. The hour of reckoning drew near, casting a suffocating shadow over his soul. Regi was ensnared, condemned to a fate he had no say in, and in the unforgiving, lightless depths of the Underground, he could feel the cold, unrelenting embrace of death inching ever closer.

As he stood among the throngs of the desperate, his heart heavy with resignation, Regi couldn't escape the chilling certainty that he was about to meet his inevitable demise. There was no escape, no reprieve. He was but a speck in the vast, merciless tapestry of this world, and in the end, he knew, beyond all doubt, that he was going to die.

The persistent thought lingered in Regi's mind, even as Robert Gailes and the aforementioned Totan leader exchanged heated words, resembling more of a curse-laden confrontation. Shifting blame, taunting - all of it mattered little to Regi, who found himself consumed by an overwhelming sense of dread.

Unbeknownst to him, he had already started moving forward, terror blending in with the motion of his clanmates. The battle had commenced, and through his blurred vision, he observed both armies closing the distance between them. While the titans remained hundreds of feet away, Robert Gailes seemed to be intentionally slowing down, letting others precede him.

Regi couldn't help but label him a coward.

Less than a hundred feet apart, with Regi's heart pounding in his chest, a sudden impact shook the ground before the two armies

could meet in the middle, bringing both armies to a standstill. They waited anxiously, grateful for the brief pause to assess the unexpected disturbance.

"Ow. Ow. Ow." A voice muttered from the settling dust, revealing a figure on the ground cradling a knee and rocking back and forth. "Ahhh... Ohhh... Ahhh... Ohhh... Ahhh."

"What the hell?" someone from Regi's side whispered.

"Where did he come from?" another added hesitantly.

The figure on the ground ceased his knee-cradling as if suddenly aware of the surroundings. With a sun-kissed grin, he stood up and began to stretch. "Whoops. Seems like I interrupted something. My bad, y'all."

Robert Gailes returned to the front, hopefully to meet his demise there, at least in Regi's hopeful thoughts.

"Who the hell are you?" Robert gruffly inquired.

The man frowned. "Watch the language, dude. I come in peace and good vibes," he said, flashing a peace sign.

A small snicker rolled through both armies, providing a momentary release of tension, only to be replaced by renewed stress once reality set in.

The Totan leader wasn't amused. "Get the hell out of here." He turned toward his army. "Charge!"

After his command, a rock struck him in the head. He fell over, blood oozing from his skull, motionless on the ground.

A hush fell over the battlefield, broken by the mysterious man's chuckle. "Whoops."

Robert Gailes laughed. "Oh! Oh! Shit! How do you like that, you bastard?! Dead by a rock! What a pathetic death, Alex! For shame!" He then turned to the man with a hearty grin. "What's your name? I need to reward one of my own thugs for killing Alex, after all."

"Who said I belong to you?" J replied. "And J, simple ol' J, is my name."

Regi sensed something was amiss.

Robert's grin disappeared. "What the hell do you mean?"

J shrugged. "I mean these guys don't have a leader anymore. So maybe I should be their leader now?"

Robert snorted. "Foolish boy. Scram before I kill you."

"Right back at ya." J threw him some finger guns. "Being the leader of your gang sounds pretty cool too."

Robert narrowed his eyes, teeth gnashing, face turning red.

Regi wasn't sure what was happening now, and neither was anyone else, he was certain.

"Let me make this simple," J smiled. "Either you and your gang pledge yourselves to me, or you can die."

Regi's world spun into a nightmarish frenzy as the bizarre figure named J captured his attention. There was something profoundly unsettling about this man, something beyond human comprehension. His confidence oozed like a toxic aura, and it left Regi baffled, his mind struggling to grasp the nature of this enigma.

Confidence, arrogance, or foolishness couldn't account for the strange power that emanated from J. It was as if he defied the very laws of nature, a force of chaos and unpredictability.

The desperation clawing at Regi's soul drove him to an act of reckless boldness. "I'll follow you!" He screamed, bulldozing over his fellow clanmates in a frantic bid for attention. Desperation gripped him, and he didn't care about the chaos he caused as he shoved Robert Gailes to the ground, staining the pimp's pristine white suit with mud. Regi's heart raced, his body trembling with a mixture of fear and uncertainty as he fell to his knees.

J regarded him with an unsettling smile. "Ahhh, well, that's a nice surprise. What's your name, good fellow?" He inquired, his tone carrying an air of amusement.

"Regi!" He shouted, sweat dripping from his brow, unable to fully comprehend the surreal sequence of events unfolding before him.

"Regi? Well, glad to have you aboard, Regi," J remarked casually, clapping his hands as if this were all part of an everyday occurrence. "I take it the army behind you is who you aligned yourself with?"

Regi managed a nod, his throat dry and his heart pounding like a drum.

"Well, this makes my job easier," J declared with a broad smile, his dark eyes fixated on the massive assembly of three thousand thugs.

Meanwhile, Robert Gailes, had regained his senses and was seething with rage. He drew a gleaming machete from his waist. "I'll have your fucking head for this-" He began, but his words turned into a gurgling, gruesome sound of agony. A torrent of blood sprayed, accompanied by the sickening tearing of flesh and bone.

Regi watched in horror as J moved with supernatural speed, ripping Gailes' head from his shoulders in a gruesome display of power. The pimp's severed head continued to contort in livid rage, oblivious to its own demise. "Out with the old, in with the new," J commented casually, holding Gailes's head as though it were a mere trophy. "Hope you all weren't attached to him."

Regi's jaw dropped, his mind reeling from the horrifying spectacle he had just witnessed. It had happened in the blink of an eye. He couldn't fathom how J had accomplished such a gruesome act. Did he use a knife, some hidden weapon? But what struck Regi the most was J's blood-soaked hand - the hand that had torn a man's head from his shoulders with brute strength. The realization dawned upon Regi - this man possessed inhuman strength, an ability that defied all reason.

J tossed Gailes's severed head at the lifeless body, and it collapsed with a finality that sent shivers down Regi's spine. Turning his attention to the Totans, J acknowledged their presence. "Well, I'm sorry... Totans, I think that's your name? Anyhow, sorry, but none of y'all spoke up," He said with feigned apology, stretching his arms as if preparing for a performance.

The dark gleam in J's eyes intensified as he delivered his chilling pronouncement. "Now you all gotta die."

A man lost his head, another his throat, and a third's spine was bent in half. A woman was gutted, her lifeless body left to crumple to the ground. Regi's eyes widened in terror as he watched J, the unstoppable force, clutching a still-pulsing heart in his bloodied hand.

Only five seconds had passed, and already the death toll had climbed to five. Regi could scarcely believe what he was witnessing. It was a nightmare come to life, a grotesque display of violence that surpassed anything he had ever read in horror books.

J moved with a terrifying grace, killing with a savagery that only a titan could match. Two minutes in, and more than a hundred were dead, their corpses left mangled and broken in the wake of his relentless onslaught. As the minutes ticked by, the death toll climbed at an alarming rate. Panic began to ripple through the ranks of the Totans, and futile attempts to flee or fight back only resulted in more carnage. J showed no mercy, no remorse, no sign of humanity.

Ten minutes passed, and hundreds more lay dead, their blood saturating the once-barren ground. It had become a field of death, a nightmarish landscape strewn with organs and bones. The Totans were no longer an army of thugs and gangsters but a desperate throng of people running for their lives. But J showed no inclination to spare them. He continued his relentless slaughter, carving through their ranks with the same chilling efficiency.

J didn't pause for breath, taunt his victims, or even acknowledge his surroundings. He just killed, methodically and ruthlessly, carving through the Totans until their numbers dwindled and their screams fell silent.

Twenty minutes elapsed, and the death toll had soared to over a thousand. J finally stopped, his entire being covered in blood. His skin, hair, and clothes were drenched in crimson, as if he were a creature from the depths of hell itself. In that moment, Regi couldn't help but feel a chilling realization. That in that crimson visage, J appeared not as a man, but as a complete and utter embodiment of chaos and violence, as if this relentless killing was what he was born to do.

The charismatic and joking facade that had once masked J's true nature had crumbled into dust. In its place stood a cold and malicious figure, one who reveled in the carnage he had wrought. The surviving Totans, gripped by fear, continued to flee, their instincts urging them to escape the monstrous entity before them.

"Is that enough?" J's question hung in the air like a malevolent cloud, and the mere weight of it seemed to suffocate the fleeing Totans. The air grew dense, as if it had turned to water, causing the survivors to gasp for breath, clutching their throats, and falling to their knees. Panic and despair had overwhelmed them to the point where sweat poured from their brows, staining their clothes.

Regi couldn't help but pity them, mourn for their cruel fate, and, deep down, feel a sense of relief that it wasn't him in their place.

"I will not ask a second time." J declared, his fingers arched like deadly claws. The threat of violence hung heavy in the air. "Answer me before I kill you all."

The cries for mercy and pleas for salvation fell on deaf ears, as J showed no inclination toward compassion. He wanted to know if they had had enough of the carnage, not whether they begged for their lives.

"I've had enough!" One brave soul finally cried out, collapsing near J.

The response seemed to amuse J, who tapped his chin in mock contemplation. "I don't know... I might need some more convincing."

J moved among the survivors, his predatory presence lingering over each trembling figure. But then J turned his attention to a young boy, no more than thirteen, who had been sobbing uncontrollably. He could only tremble as J raised his head with a deadly finger. "Y'know you're pretty young, but I just gotta ask you... would you be my subordinate?"

The young boy nodded, trembling with fear.

"Excellent!" J clapped his hands, and the suffocating pressure on the battlefield lifted. The survivors gasped for breath, relieved to be free of the oppressive aura.

But J was far from finished.

"Hey, Regi!" J called out, and Regi flinched, his eyes fixed on the monstrous figure.

"Me and you have our work cut out for us," J continued, a wicked grin spreading across his face. "All these good people you see scattered behind me! They're our's now!"

Regi's mind reeled in disbelief. He couldn't comprehend what J was saying. It couldn't be true...

"And those people you protected, too! They're also part of our army!" J announced with delight.

Regi turned his gaze toward the Ackers, his own clan, who had stayed to witness the horrifying spectacle. They were now part of this madness, and Regi knew that they had made a grave mistake.

The revelation left Regi with a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. This monstrous entity, this devil in human form, had just reshaped the world around them, and Regi had no idea what would come next in this living nightmare.

J grinned, his expression gleeful, as if this twisted turn of events was the happiest day of his life.

Regi's abrupt awakening from the nightmare left him drenched in sweat and gasping for breath. The stark contrast between the horrors of his nightmares and the reality of his office was disorienting. Instead of a blood-soaked battlefield, he found himself surrounded by piles of papers and rolling pencils.

His hand reached for the cup of coffee on his desk, long gone cold, but it served its purpose as a grounding presence. He took a sip, grimacing at the bitter taste, yet welcoming the familiar routine. It was funny how his preferences had changed since he had met J. The young man had left an indelible mark on him, not just through trauma but also through a strange sense of camaraderie.

Regi had never felt so utterly exhausted in his life. J had entrusted him with the command of a revolutionary force, and the weight of that responsibility pressed down on him like an anvil. While his experience as the second-in-command had prepared him for certain aspects of leadership, leading a group of individuals was one thing, but a whole army was an entirely different beast.

Troops and money, he thought. Those were the two main necessities, the basic components of any military endeavor. But as

he delved deeper into the intricacies of leadership, he realized that the simplicity of those words masked the complex systems and challenges that lay beneath.

But he wasn't facing this daunting task alone. Regi knew he had a team of comrades who were willing to share the burden. Tony, Geralt, Bjorn, Natasha, Harley-these were the individuals he relied on, each with their own strengths and expertise.

Regi took a deep breath, trying to push aside the lingering effects of the nightmare.

The Yeagerists, under J's leadership, had been meticulously crafted over the past two years. From the depths of the Underground, they had recruited a unique and capable group of individuals, each with their own role to play in the grand scheme of their revolution. J affectionately referred to them as Capos, and together, they were the commanders who would help steer their army towards their ultimate goals.

Together, the seven of them had managed to quietly take control of the Underground, their actions shrouded in secrecy. The district-by-district takeover had gone unnoticed by the general population, leaving them to operate in the shadows.

Regi leaned back in his chair, contemplating the structure they had established. Thirteen districts had been designated, each serving a specific purpose in advancing their cause. The Capos controlled and managed these districts, ensuring that they contributed to the overall success of the Yeagerists.

Tony, the master of bribery, controlled the fourth and eighth districts, using his influence to keep authorities at bay and maintain control over key figures in power, above and below ground.

Geralt presided over the seventh, ninth, and twelfth districts, handling the grittier aspects of their operations, including

assassinations that kept the scum in check and away from their territory.

Bjorn presided over the first, fifth, and sixth districts, which thrived on drugs and alcohol. While these districts were impoverished, they provided a consistent source of income as the residents sought solace in their vices.

Natasha was in charge of the second and eleventh districts, where she expertly navigated the world of money laundering, turning illicit gains into legitimate assets with meticulous precision.

Harley's role was simple yet effective, managing the third and tenth districts, where she orchestrated robberies and heists to acquire valuable resources for the Yeagerists.

The communication network between the Capos allowed them to share information and opportunities. They would leverage each other's strengths and resources to further their goals. Geralt's recent message to Bjorn regarding a group of residents in the twelfth district in need of illicit substances was just one example of their cooperation.

District thirteen, the heart of the operation, was where Regi presided. Here, he coordinated all the reports and information from his Capos, serving as the central hub of their organization. He knew everything that happened in the Underground, from the recruits Tony found, to the casualties reported by Geralt, the finances generated by Bjorn, the deceptions spun by Natasha, and the chaos sown by Harley.

It was a tremendous responsibility, one that weighed heavily on Regi's shoulders. He was privy to every detail of their operations, and the burden of it all sometimes became too much to bear. He sighed and muttered his frustration, his head sinking into his arms. Despite the power and control they had achieved, the cost of leadership was proving to be a heavy toll on his psyche.

Regi's office was interrupted by the entrance of Natasha, a striking and enigmatic figure with fiery red hair, glasses perched on her nose, and an air of confidence that could both captivate and intimidate. She brought with her two steaming cups of coffee, placing one near Regi's head. He raised his weary gaze to meet hers, appreciating the warmth both of the coffee and the gesture.

With gratitude, Regi took a sip of the hot coffee, feeling its comforting heat course through him. It was a small solace, especially after the haunting dream that had shaken him.

Natasha, ever composed, sipped her own coffee. "Long day?"

"Yeah, it was." Regi admitted. "We've got gangsters acting up in each district, especially in eight. They're seeking revenge for their members who got killed by district six. Tony is being his usual self."

"An asshole?" Natasha interjected.

Regi chuckled. "Exactly. He's provoking those powerful figures, aggravating them to no end. It drives them crazy that they can't do anything to change their circumstances, and Tony takes great pleasure in rubbing it in their faces."

Natasha nodded, understanding the dynamic all too well.

"And don't even get me started on the blatant lies he's feeding to the recruits," Regi continued, frustration evident in his voice. "He tells them they'll become the most powerful people in the Underground, with all the food, money, and lovers they could want. It's all just a web of deceit, and our instructors have to set them straight. But how are we supposed to inspire loyalty when they realize they've been lied to?"

Natasha's response was pragmatic, as always. "We use fear instead of trust. Just mentioning Geralt's name is enough to silence most people."

Regi couldn't help but smirk at the truth in her words. Geralt's reputation as a formidable enforcer had a chilling effect on those who crossed his path.

Regi leaned forward, his voice low but resolute. "We need to find a way to strike a balance, Natasha. Between fear and trust, between power and humanity. It's the only way we can keep the Underground from tearing itself apart."

Natasha nodded, her gaze fixed on Regi. "It's a delicate line to walk, but it's essential for our survival. We need to maintain control."

Regi exhaled, feeling a sense of relief as he continued, "We also need to ensure our Capos stay aligned with our goals. It's easy for power to corrupt, and we can't afford internal strife."

Natasha glanced around the room, as if assessing the unseen forces that surrounded them. "I'll keep a close eye on them. Trust me, Regi, they know where their loyalties lie."

As they talked, they were interrupted by a quiet knock on the door. Regi and Natasha exchanged a glance before Regi called out, "Come in."

The door opened to reveal Tony, who sauntered into the room with his characteristic swagger. His presence alone seemed to bring an air of unpredictability. He was dressed in a sharp violet suit, a stark contrast to the rugged environment they operated in.

Tony's grin was sly as he spoke, "Did I hear you two discussing the delicate balance of power and morality? How intriguing."

Regi and Natasha exchanged an annoyed look.

"How long were you eavesdropping?" Natasha sighed.

"Eavesdropping? No, no, no. Nothing of the sort, I just happened to hear the remnants of your conversation. Before knocking on the

door."

They all knew it was bullshit.

Regi gestured for Tony to take a seat. "We were just discussing the challenges we're facing in the Underground, Tony. It's becoming increasingly difficult to maintain control without resorting to unethical means."

Tony leaned back, steepling his fingers as he thought. "Ah, the eternal struggle. Well, my friends, sometimes the Underground forces our hand. It's a beast that devours the weak and rewards the ruthless."

Regi sighed, realizing that Tony had a point. The Underground was a place where ideals often crumbled in the face of harsh realities.

"But," Tony continued, a glint of mischief in his eyes, "That doesn't mean we can't enjoy the ride, right? After all, we've come this far by being the best at what we do."

Natasha couldn't help but let an unamused smile come to her features. "We've made it this far by being ruthless when necessary, but let's remember what we're fighting for."

Regi added, "Our ultimate goal is to make the Underground a better place, even if it means navigating the treacherous path with care."

Tony leaned forward, his tone serious. "I agree, Regi. Or I would, but that's the unofficial goal we have." His tone became a touch more sarcastic. "We just do whatever J wants. Not that I mind."

Regi raised an eyebrow, a hint of skepticism in his expression. "Are you suggesting that J's objectives might not align with the betterment of the Underground, Tony?"

Tony leaned back, a smirk playing on his lips. "I'm just saying, we all have our motivations here. J's a charismatic leader, and he's

convinced us to follow his vision. But who really knows what's going on inside that man's head?"

Natasha chimed in, her voice calm and measured. "J's secrecy and unpredictability are part of what makes him so effective. We may not always understand his methods, but we trust his leadership. It's gotten us this far."

Regi couldn't help but feel a sense of unease. While they had achieved remarkable success under J's guidance, the enigmatic leader had always been a mysterious figure in the shadows. Tony's comments were a reminder that their trust in J was built on shaky ground.

Tony, sensing the tension in the room, shrugged it off with a nonchalant grin. "Well, regardless of our leader's true motives, we're in this together. We've built something powerful, and as long as we keep our wits about us, we'll continue to thrive."

He looked up at the ceiling, a manic grin taking over his features for a split moment. "Perhaps even more than what we expect."

Annie had made a decision, one that she realized wasn't as tough as she had initially thought. She shakily extended her hand, allowing J to shake it, sealing her commitment to the Yeagerists.

J's smile was warm, welcoming, and perhaps even genuine. "Great to have you aboard, Annie."

However, Annie remained silent, her thoughts swirling with uncertainty and apprehension. She couldn't help but feel a chill running through her, a sense that the person before her was no longer the man she had initially encountered.

As J stood up, dusting off his legs, Annie moved to follow him, but to her mild surprise, he picked her up, carrying her in a princess carry.

In any other situation, she might have felt embarrassed, but now all she felt was a cold unease.

"I can walk just fine," Annie said, trying to assert some control over the situation, though deep down, she knew she lacked the strength to do so.

J simply shrugged, unfazed by her reluctance. "Sure," he replied nonchalantly.

Annie remained silent, the tension between them palpable. She couldn't shake the feeling of discomfort that gnawed at her.

"I won't harm you, Annie," J assured her, his voice calm and reassuring.

Annie kept her discomfort and tension to herself, her gaze averted.

When they were halfway to their lodgings, Annie finally broke her silence. Her voice trembled as she asked the question that had been gnawing at her since she had first witnessed J's incredible strength.

"How are you so strong?" she inquired, avoiding eye contact with J.

J's response was cryptic, and it sent a shiver down Annie's spine.

"I'm more titan than human," he revealed, leaving Annie with a myriad of questions.

"What? What does that mean?" she asked.

"What do you think?" J replied cryptically.

"I... I don't know. That you're some kind of monster?" Annie bit her lip, the words escaping before her brain could catch up. Her heart pounded in her chest, and she dared not look up at J, fearing the haunting expression that might meet her eyes.

Instead, J emitted a low chuckle. "Well, you wouldn't be entirely wrong. Let me share a bit about myself, Annie. I'm not entirely human."

Annie moved to speak, but J interrupted her. "Since I was very young, I possessed an extraordinary physical prowess. I could leap from building to building at the age of five, take down adults effortlessly, and my endurance surpassed all norms. I was a natural anomaly, a freak of nature. Everyone in my district knew it, none more so than my uncle."

The lodgings drew nearer as J steadily walked with Annie in his arms. "My uncle is Eren's dad, his name is Grisha, and he's from Marley."

Annie's eyes widened, words caught in her throat, questions struggling to escape. J continued with a nonchalant tone, "Grisha was a doctor for the revolution, you know the deal. He and his boys got caught, were sent to their death, yada yada yada. He got saved by the then Attack Titan. Ate him, transformed, appeared outside the walls, and now he's my uncle in all but blood. Happy story, right?" J grinned. "Well, not really. He lost his friends, his ex-wife, tried to kill himself, attempted to make Eren the new Attack Titan, but I stopped him. I like to think that his mental state is better now."

J blinked. "Sorry, rambled on there, you know how it is. Anyway, since I was such a freak of nature, it was only natural that Grisha and I would run a few tests on my body. Lo and behold, my body's composition is more similar to a titan than a human."

J grinned, watching Annie's stunned expression. "What? Did you really think my muscles would be this defined and matured at 12 years old? I look more like a young adult than a pre-teen."

Annie couldn't deny it, being pressed against J's well-defined chest was a clear example. She could feel his abs poking out and pressing against her side. A light dusting of pink made its way to her face as

she realized the sensation, quickly disappearing as her brain caught up with the reality of whose body she was against.

J continued. "Yeah, I've got the physique of a god, complete with regenerative powers that rival your average shifter. Only, I like to believe my healing speed puts theirs to shame," He said with a confident grin. "When I was just a kid, I used to run endless miles around the district, subjecting myself to thousands upon thousands of exercises to become stronger. Anyone else would've broken under the strain, failed at the attempt. But not me. It was a week of pure torture before my body adapted to the stress, and boom."

"Boom?" Annie echoed.

"I can knock out thousands of exercises without a drop of sweat," J grinned, the glint in his eyes hinting at a satisfaction with his exceptional abilities. "I've surpassed the limits of your average human."

Annie, though not surprised, pressed on. "So, why are you sharing all this with me?"

J's grin took on a slightly malicious edge. "Well, Annie, you're officially part of my crew now. You had questions about me that you were too hesitant to voice, so I figured I'd answer them for you. Call it a gesture of camaraderie. And let's be real, who could you run off and spill these secrets to?"

Annie felt a shiver crawl down her spine.

J approached the outskirts of her lodgings, where the shadows danced with the flickering flames just beginning to light up the darkness.

Annie, unable to contain her curiosity, blurted out, "Then what about your scars? Shouldn't those have been healed?"

J hummed, a thoughtful expression on his face. "Ah, those." His tone held a hint of intrigue. "Well, at first, I had no idea. A few years before you guys arrived, I had already got scarred, lip by a rock and thigh by an arrow. Both of them were pretty gruesome at the time, but after they healed I found it a lot harder to hurt myself. I literally tried to stab a knife through my hand, and it only managed to slightly cut the skin." J laughed slightly at the memory, while Annie could only stare.

"When Bertholdt attacked, and his steam scarred me, I was surprised. It was only after some experimenting with Grisha that we discovered it was because my body hadn't adapted to that kind of damage before." Annie's confusion lingered, prompting J to elaborate. "I had never been burned by steam or water, mainly because I'm not an idiot. So my body never experienced that kind of trauma before. But when it did, the first taste came from the steam of the colossal Titan, a supernatural presence. Not a pleasant experience, by the way. Do you see where I'm going with this?"

Annie nodded slowly. "Your body couldn't handle it?"

"Couldn't handle that sort of trauma." J nodded his head. "Sure, it healed up, allowed me to live in unbearable comfort. But the healing factor did its best." J chuckled. "You should've seen the other guys; those noble bastards were nothing more than piles of flesh."

"And if you were to... experience it again? What would happen?"

"Just a little bit of red skin, I would assume."

Ah, that was... quite the revelation. An attack from the Colossal titan would just irritate his skin.

"Is there anything else I should know?" She inquired.

J's grin widened, his eyes glinting with a mischievous spark. "Oh, Annie, we've only scratched the surface. But don't worry, you'll learn everything in due time."

J set Annie gently on the ground in front of her lodging, and there was a somber look in his eyes as he spoke.

"I feel sorry for you all," J began, his gaze fixed on Annie, as if he were trying to convey a deeper truth.

J's thoughts seemed to drift back to a distant memory, one from his childhood perhaps, as he continued to speak. "I remember reading a book when I was very young, about a man called Genghis Khan. It was many years ago that I read about him, but I think I know why I still remember."

J's voice held a hint of sadness as he quoted, "I am the punishment of God... If you had not committed great sins, God would not have sent a punishment like me upon you."

His gaze shifted upwards, towards the night sky, as if searching for answers among the stars. It was a moment of reflection on the nature of his actions, the role he played in this ruthless world.

Before leaving, J locked eyes with Annie once more, his words carrying an eerie weight. "I think it's fitting."

With that cryptic statement, he turned away and departed, leaving Annie alone with her thoughts and the heavy feeling of uncertainty that had settled upon her.

J continued to stroll away from Annie, a merry tune whistling from his lips, both hands comfortably nestled in his pockets. The intriguing shift in events left him musing, eagerly anticipating the ripples it would send through the world. Excitement, albeit just a bit, danced in his thoughts.

Abruptly, he halted, a scowl replacing the amusement on his features. His fists clenched inside his pockets, he couldn't help but growl, "Come and face me, you bitch."

Footsteps echoed from behind him, emanating from the outskirts of the girl's lodgings.

"Well, glad to see that you still have some instincts inside that empty head of yours, monkey-fuck."

J growled, swiftly pivoting on his foot to confront his most loathed adversary. "Penelope fucking Piper. What the hell are you doing here?"

Penelope, with red and curly hair, freckles adorning her skin, outwardly seemed like an innocent girl, except for the boiling rage evident in her hazel eyes. "I don't have to tell you shit, monkey-fuck."

J narrowed his eyes, advancing with purpose. Penelope responded with a growl, matching his steps.

"Oh? You're approaching me?" J remarked, his expression darkening, and his fists clenching.

"I can't beat the shit out of you without getting closer," Penelope retorted, her growl carrying as she stood just a foot away from J. Forced to look up at him due to the significant difference in height, she added, "Nice speech you made in the canteen."

"It's not called a fucking canteen." J reared his fist back. "It's called a motherfucking cafe!"

Sorry for the wait. Happy Late Christmans and New years.

Chapter a bit shooter than what the fanfic is used to, but I just needed to write something down for this. Try and get the brain juices flowing again. I'm looking back at the notes I made back when I first started writing this and god it's going to be difficult to try and get back on track on how I want the story to go. But I'll try my best.

Made some new fanfics since I last updated, give them a read if you like.